KOREA’S 96% REDUCTION IN CHILD TRAFFIC FATALITIES

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1. INTRODUCTION
In Korea, the number of child deaths from road traffic accidents fell 96% from 1,766 deaths in 1988 to 71 deaths in 2016. Few other countries have made such an improvement in a relatively short period of time.
Korea has implemented various policies designed to reduce child traffic accidents, and these policies can be classified into the aspects of 3E: Engineering, Education and Enforcement.
In terms of engineering, the school zone program was introduced in 1995. It led to the designation of about 15,799 school zones around kindergartens and elementary schools as well as the installation of road safety facilities.
As for education, the Ministry of Education required all kindergartens and elementary schools to conduct road safety education. All children now have been given compulsory road safety education of minimum 10 hours every year.
In terms of enforcement, the new penalty system was introduced in 2011 under which traffic violators in school zones are punished with double fines and double penalty points.
This paper explains in detail about the child traffic safety policies such as the child safety laws and regulations, the child safety education, and the school zone improvement programs, and explains about the trend of child traffic fatalities in Korea.

2. TREND IN CHILD TRAFFIC FATALITIES
The number of children killed in road traffic accidents in Korea drastically went down from 1,766 in 1988 to 71 in 2016. This means that the fatal road accidents involving children were cut by more than 96% over about 28 years.
The total number of traffic fatalities in Korea decreased from 11,563 in 1988 to 4,292 in 2016, about 63% reduction during the same period.

Figure 1: The number of child traffic fatalities in Korea
3. ROAD SAFETY REGULATIONS FOR CHILDREN
In Korea, regulations aimed at protecting children from road accidents have been strengthened continually by various acts including the Road Traffic Act, Transportation Safety Act, Motor Vehicle Management Act, and Traffic Accident Management Special Act.

The violating drivers in the school zones should pay double fines and receive double penalty points than other area according to the Road Traffic Act.

The driver causing an accident in the school zone should be prosecuted and punished criminally according to the Traffic Accident Management Special Act.

4. ROAD SAFETY EDUCATION FOR CHILDREN
Under the Child Welfare Act in Korea, all kindergartens and elementary schools are required to implement road safety education for a minimum 10 hours a year and at least once every two months.

These educations are carried out in the classrooms and at the special safety facilities called as the traffic parks and road safety experience centers.

5. SCHOOL ZONE IMPROVEMENT PROGRAMS
The areas within the 300m radius from the main gate of kindergartens and elementary schools are designated as the school zones by the Road Traffic Act.

It also provides for the speed restriction of motor vehicles to less than 30km in the school zones.

As of the end of 2014, school zones were designated at 15,799 locations in the whole country.

6. OPERATION OF SCHOOL BUSES FOR CHILDREN
In Korea, school buses are commonly used for traveling to and from kindergartens and infant nursery facilities like childcare centers as well as private teaching institutes for piano, violin, fine art or athletic lessons. There are about 64,863 school buses for children.

All school buses should be registered at the local police station, and the safety requirements of school buses are described in the Road Traffic Act and Motor Vehicle Management Act.

The school bus operator, usually the school chief, and drivers are required to receive periodical education aimed at enhancing their safety awareness.

7. CIVIC ACTIVITIES FOR CHILDREN’S SAFETY
In Korea, there are various kinds of voluntary civic groups for the child traffic safety such as the Korea Green Mothers Association with 530,000 member mothers, Korea Child Safety Foundation, Safety Kids Korea, Citizens’ Coalition for Safety, and Korea Best Drivers Association.

These civic groups are working voluntarily for the safe school travel, children safety education, and proposals for the children safety to the government.
8. CONCLUSIONS

Various efforts are being made throughout the world to reduce the child traffic accidents. However, many governments face limitations in terms of budget and manpower. Under these circumstances, it is essential to formulate the child safety policies most effectively.

Korea has cut its child traffic deaths by 96% between 1988 and 2016, and the experience of Korea for the child safety is worth to be referred in other countries. Korea’s experience shows some important points that the strong laws and regulation are most effective for the child safety, the installation of safety facilities and school zone improvement are important, and the safety education and civic group activities are necessary to reduce the child traffic fatalities.

REFERENCES


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