

Company develops child seats for ambulances

BY TY YOUNG

tyyoung@bizjournals.com

An East Valley startup is looking to change the way infants and toddlers are secured in emergency vehicles.

Gilbert-based Serenity Safety Products is preparing to roll out the Guardian Safety Seat — a secure, efficient children's car seat that can be installed directly into ambulances and fire trucks.

Those vehicles generally are the first to arrive at an accident site and the first to leave, speeding down city streets to save lives. In most cases, patients are strapped to a gurney, which in turn is locked to the floor of the ambulance. When the ambulance also must transport small children, emergency personnel are forced to hold them in their arms and sit in a chair next to the injured adult, said Kurt Hinkle, chief executive of Serenity.

"The safe restraint of children and infants in ambulances has always been a challenge," said Hinkle, who recently retired from the Phoenix Fire Department. "Emergency workers have had to hold infants in their arms during transport, have the gurney occupant hold the infant, or use complicated systems of straps or boards that attach to the gurney to secure the infant."

Hinkle spent his last three years with the fire department searching for devices to secure uninjured children in emergency vehicles. Unable to find anything, he started Serenity with Dan Sjoquist, chief financial and operations officer,



PROVIDED BY SERENITY SAFE PRODUCTS

An emergency medical technician adjusts a Guardian Safety Seat in an ambulance. A Gilbert company is in talks with local emergency responders about using the seat.

and Donsun Shin, an assistant professor of industrial design at Arizona State University.

Emergency vehicles and public transportation are exempt from Arizona laws governing the use of child car seats.

"I've been questioning it for a long time," he said.

Serenity's "seat within a seat" design

uses a five-point harness to secure children weighing 5 to 85 pounds. The backrest folds down to accommodate toddlers, and the seat cushion can be removed to secure infants in a hidden carrier, which is stowed underneath the chair when not in use. Both fit everyday car seat safety specifications, Hinkle said.

Chandler Fire Department Battalion Chief Dan Couch said transporting uninjured children from emergency scenes often is "problematic." Having children sit on the bench seat next to the gurney in an ambulance is not advisable, he said.

"We don't want to transport them without a restraint, but the problem is there is no way to secure a forward-facing car seat" in an emergency vehicle, he said.

Mesa-based Southwest Ambulance has removable car seats in all of its 300 ambulances, but the company always is looking for cost-effective ways to protect patients and passengers, said spokesman Josh Weiss.

Serenity expects to begin production at its Gilbert facility by the end of the month, Hinkle said. Company officials have discussed the product with local companies, but Hinkle would not disclose which ones because negotiations are ongoing.

The seats are expected to sell for about \$3,400.

GET CONNECTED

Serenity Safety Products:

www.serenitysafetyproducts.com

Daily business headlines

sent to you via e-mail

...read it before the next morning's paper!

Get *The Phoenix Business Journal's* NEW e-mail headline service for breaking local business stories every day at 3pm. Read the news before the next day's morning paper. It's FREE in your e-mail.

To sign up, point your browser to phoenix.bizjournals.com and click on E-MAIL ALERTS to get news that's strictly business, strictly local.

The Valley's premier source for local business news.

PHOENIX
**Business
Journal**

phoenix.bizjournals.com