Saukville EMTs trained in fine art of installing child safety seats

Child safety seats have become such common elements of family life, they are easily taken for granted.

That is not the case for Saukville Fire Department emergency medical technicians John Marchek and Phyllis Carrier, who recently became certified car-seat technicians
through the Safe Kids USA training program.

The national program is sponsored by General Motors, following the premise that the proper use of child restraints can greatly reduce the risk of injury or death in a crash.

Program proponents contend that 73% of safety seats are improperly installed in family vehicles. Nearly half of all children killed in vehicle accidents were not using safety devices, organizers note.

Earning Safe Child certification is no simple process. Program participants must complete four days of study and hands-on practice guided by trained instructors on the proper use of car seats, booster seats and seat belts.

Carrier, a lieutenant with the Emergency Medical Service and a 26-year member of the department, and Marchek, a 12-year department veteran, were invited to

take part in the program after the Saukville Fire Department offered to host regional training sessions last fall.

“It is a very intensive training program. When the people from Safe Kids first asked if they could use our firehouse, I thought it would only be for a couple of hours.
Then they said they would need the building for four days,” Fire Chief Gilly Schultz said.

By the end of those four days, there were 10 new safety-seat installers.

To cap off the training, an installation “blitz” was held that resulted in the inspection of 43 cars.

“When I drove past the fire station that night and saw all of those cars, I wondered what was going on that I wasn’t told about,” Schultz said.

“They spent as much time as was needed on every installation. They were doing an installation on an older pickup truck and just couldn’t get it right. It ended up taking two hours, but they wouldn’t let the vehicle leave until it was done.”

Now that the department has the only trained safety seat installers in Ozaukee County, plans are in the works to make that expertise available to every parent who wants to make sure their child is riding safely.

“When we can group a couple installation requests together, we’ll schedule a time that is convenient for everyone. This is something we think is important to do for the community,” Schultz said.

Information on safety seat installations is available by leaving a message at the fire station, 284-5800.

Saukville Fire Department EMTs John Marchek (left) and Phyllis Carrier made sure 2-year-old Callahan Marchek was securely strapped in his car seat. The EMTs completed a four-day Safe Kids USA training program sponsored by General Motors, and are the county’s only trained child seat technicians. They intend to hold regular car seat inspections at the fire station. Photo by Mark Jaeger