

Parents, don't leave your children in the hot seat

So far this year there have been 28 confirmed child vehicular heat-stroke deaths in the United States – a record number for this time of year. July is the deadliest month for these tragedies. Each year on average, 37 children die in hot cars; last year 43 young children lost their lives.

Such tragedies are predictable and preventable. Parents and caregivers are urged to be extra vigilant during any changes in the daily routine, which is what leads to most of these accidental deaths.

According to KidsAndCars.org president and founder Janette Fennell, "We always see an increase in child injuries and deaths this time of year. It is devastating to know there are families all across America right now holding their precious babies, unaware that they will lose them in a hot car this summer."

The inside of a vehicle acts as a greenhouse, heating up very quickly, and a child's body overheats three to five times faster than an adult body. Even with the windows cracked, the temperature inside a car can reach 125 degrees in minutes; the majority of this rise in temperature happens within 10 minutes. Cracking the windows does not help slow the heating process or decrease the maximum temperature. Heatstroke deaths in cars have occurred when the outside temperature was as low as 60 degrees.

A change in daily routine, lack of sleep, stress, hormone swings, fatigue, and simple distractions are things all new parents experience and these are often contributing factors when children have been unknowingly left alone in vehicles. Babies in particular often fall asleep

in their child safety seats, becoming quiet, unnoticeable passengers. At a glance, rear-facing car seats look the same whether there is a baby in it or not.

Fennell recommends that parents implement the "Look Before You Lock" safety checklist that provides simple tips to protect their child:

To be sure your child is never left behind in the back seat of a car...

- Make it a routine to open the back door of your car every time you park to check that no one has been left behind.
- Put something you need in the back seat to remind you to open the back door every time you park – cell phone, employee badge, handbag, left shoe, work computer, etc. (The idea is if you leave the vehicle without this item, you would have to go back to get it.)
- Ask your babysitter or childcare provider to call you if your child hasn't arrived as scheduled.
- Keep a stuffed animal in baby's car seat. Place it on the front passenger seat as a reminder when baby is in the back seat.

To be sure children cannot get into a parked car...

- Keep vehicles locked at all times, even in the garage or driveway and even if you do not have children.
- Keys and remote openers should



never be left within reach of children.

- If a child is missing, immediately check the passenger compartment and trunk of all vehicles in the area very carefully.

For more information on child safety in vehicles, visit www.KidsAndCars.org

Founded in 1996, KidsAndCars.org is the only national nonprofit child safety organization dedicated to preventing injuries and deaths of children in and around vehicles. The organization promotes awareness among parents, caregivers and the general public, and works to prevent tragedies through data collection, public education, policy change and survivor advocacy.

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