



FACT SHEET

Motor Vehicle-Related Pediatric Hyperthermia Fatalities

August 2014

Epidemiology

Since 1998, 625 children have died in the United States from being left alone in motor vehicles. From January to August 2014, fourteen children have been confirmed to have died of hyperthermia from being left alone in a vehicle. Among these deaths, 52% of the children were forgotten by the caregiver, 29% were playing in the unattended vehicle, and 18% were left intentionally by the caregiver and 1% of circumstances unclear. Most victims have been younger than 2 years of age.

Heat Dynamics & Hyperthermia

On a mild day of only 80 degrees, the inside of a vehicle can become extremely hot. In only 10 minutes raising the inside temperature of the vehicle to 99 degrees, in 20 minutes to 109 degrees, 30 minutes to 114 degrees, and 60 minutes to 123 degrees. The sun's radiation heats objects in the vehicle, like the dashboard, steering wheel, seats, etc. These heated objects then heat the trapped air inside of the vehicle, similarly to that of a convection oven. Among children heatstroke can occur when the core body temperature reaches 104 degrees-considered lethal. A child's thermoregulatory system heats the body 3 to 5 times faster than an adult, making inside a vehicle even more deadly.



Source: General Motors

U.S. Laws Prohibiting Leaving a Child Alone in a Motor Vehicle

In the United States, 19 State laws prohibit leaving a child alone in a motor vehicle. The following link provides a description to each of these state laws [<http://www.procarseatsafety.com/children-heat--cars.html>].

Prevention

1. **Never leave child alone in a motor vehicle, not even for a minute** (it is illegal in many states). Take your child with you first before leaving your car.
2. **Leave Reminders** on the floor by the baby (briefcase, purse, cell phone-something needed at your final destination). Especially important during a change in routine from day care to workplace. Request your day care provider to call you anytime the baby does not show up. This prevents forgetfulness during a change in routine.
3. **Lock Your Car:** Keep your car locked when you're not in it so children are unable to climb in on their own.
4. **Call 911:** If you see a child alone in a motor vehicle, call 911. Save a Life, Save a Child!

Resources (including downloadable educational materials)

- Pro Consumer Safety/Pro Car Seat Safety: www.procarseatsafety.com
- Department of Geosciences, SFSU: www.gqweather.com/heat
- NHTSA: <http://www.safercar.gov/parents/heatstroke.htm>
- Safe Kids: www.safekids.org

