



UNIFIED FIRE AUTHORITY

JULY SAFETY MESSAGE

Leaving Children Unattended in Vehicles

Unified Fire Authority wants to remind us not to leave children unattended in vehicles due to the risk of heatstroke death. This article will talk about the dangers of doing so in detail and will share some facts and links to websites that will identify some safety measures that you can implement with your family members.

Let me start by saying, “Don’t do it, don’t ever do it.”

Please don’t leave a child unattended in a vehicle, even for what is intended to be just a few minutes. Mere minutes matter. In fact, two-thirds of the temperature rise inside a vehicle occurs in the first 20 minutes! On average, 38 children under the age of 15 die each year from heatstroke and 18 have died in 2019 thus far. Did you know that “cracking” windows has very little effect on keeping the interior of a parked car from heating up? One of the most significant factors regarding how fast the interior of a vehicle heats up and how hot it ultimately get is the color of the interior. It doesn’t take a day of extreme heat to create this danger. For example, on a day where outside temperatures reach 80 degrees Fahrenheit (F), interior temperatures can reach 123 degrees F in only 60 minutes. Objects such as dashboards that are dark in color can reach temperatures of 180 to 200 degrees F and heat the adjacent air rapidly. A published Heating Study Summary shows temperature rise in a vehicle relative to time. Temperature rise can be as much as 19 degrees F in just 10 minutes, 29 degrees F in 20 minutes and 34 degrees in 30 minutes. On a day of just 80 degrees F ambient temperature, the numbers add up exponentially. The danger is further enhanced by the fact that children’s thermoregulatory systems are not as efficient as an adult’s and their body temperatures warm at a rate that is 3 to 5 times faster than an adult’s.

There are several safety tips for ways to prevent hot car deaths. Those tips can be referenced at <https://www.childhelp.org/preventing-hot-car-deaths/> and are very useful.

Several safety recommendations can be referenced at http://binniewebdesign.com/NoHeatStroke/safety_recommendations.htm including, “Look Before You Leave” and “Don’t Assume Cooler Weather Is Safe”. Please take the time to do some research and to adopt safety practices to keep children safe from the dangers of heatstroke related to being left in unattended vehicles.

Thank you and as always, Stay Safe.
Mike Watson, Assistant Chief
Unified Fire Authority