KIDS AND HOT CARS TURN INTO TRAGEDY

(SANTA BARBARA, Calif.) – The Public Health Department reminds residents to prevent deaths with kids left in hot cars. In 2015, a child died in Santa Barbara County due to heatstroke when the child was left/got locked in a hot car. Nationally, from 1998-2017, 729 children died due to heatstroke in a hot vehicle with 29 of those occurring in 2017 to date.

A child’s body temperature can rise up to five times faster than an adult’s. Heatstroke begins when the core body temperature reaches around 104 degrees; death can follow in a child when that temperature reaches 107 degrees. Even with moderate temperatures outside, the inside of a car can heat up to well above 110 degrees in minutes.

Some simple reminders include:

- “Look Before You Lock” to make sure there are no children left in the vehicle.
- Write a reminder note about the child and put it on the car door or dashboard to see it when you leave the vehicle.
- Set a reminder on your cell phone to alert you to check that you dropped your child off at daycare.
- Place a purse, briefcase, or cell phone next to the child’s car seat to remind yourself that your child is in the car.
- Keep a familiar object, like a stuffed toy, in your child’s car seat. When you remove it to buckle up your child, place the object in the front seat. It will serve as a reminder to always check the back seat for your child.
- Never let kids play in an unattended vehicle or leave a child alone in a car, even if you leave the windows partly open or the air conditioning on—even for just a few minutes.

If you see a child left alone in a hot vehicle and the child appears to be responsive and okay, quickly do everything possible to locate the parents. If the child is not responsive or appears to be in distress, call 911 immediately and follow their directions. When the child is out of the vehicle, cool the child rapidly (not with an ice bath, but by spraying with cool water).

Bystanders should know that states have “Good Samaritan” laws that protect them from lawsuits for helping a person in an emergency. So if you happen to see a child alone in a hot car, do not hesitate—please act!

We need parents, caregivers and bystanders all working together to help end these tragic heatstroke deaths—because hot cars kill children.

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