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The Maine Bureau of Highway Safety Urges Families and Caregivers: Once You Park, Stop, Look, Lock.

Augusta, Maine — Vehicular heatstroke is one of the leading causes of non-crash, vehicle-related death for children 14 and younger in the United States. Parents and caregivers who think child heatstroke deaths could “never” happen on their watch should think again. Tragically, “never” does happen. The U.S. Department of Transportation’s National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) and the Maine Bureau of Highway Safety urge parents and caregivers to learn about and share critical information about the dangers of leaving children alone in hot cars. Help us spread the word: ***Once You Park, Stop, Look, Lock.***

Since 1998, when safety advocates first began tracking, vehicular heatstroke has killed more than 965 children. Each death was preventable. More than half (52.6%) of these tragedies occur when a child is “forgotten” by a parent or caregiver and left in a hot car. A busy parent or caregiver may unintentionally forget that a quiet or sleeping child is in the back of the vehicle.

Toddlers and young children are at-risk as well because they are more likely to climb into a vehicle without supervision. Children “gaining access” to a vehicle account for nearly one-quarter of child heatstroke fatalities. Some children climb into a vehicle without the knowledge of an adult and may be unable to exit the car, especially if child locks are activated.

The reason hot cars are so unsafe is because inside vehicle temperatures can rise quickly, to up to 50 degrees warmer than the outside air temperature, so even if it’s a cool day outside, a vehicle may still pose a threat to a child. A child’s body temperature increases 3 to 5 times faster than an adult’s.

“The bottom line is all of us are susceptible to forgetfulness. It doesn’t matter who you are, what you do, or where you come from. In our fast-paced society, routines can change at a moment’s notice. It is during these moments of hurriedness and change in routine that many of these preventable tragedies occur,” says Lauren Stewart, Maine’s Highway Safety Director.

For this reason, it is more important than ever to remember: ***Once You Park, Stop, Look, Lock.***

Maine Bureau of Highway Safety urges all parents and caregivers to do these things to help prevent child heatstroke:

Buckle Up. Drive Safely.



Office Located At:
Central Maine Commerce Center
45 Commerce Dr, Suite 1
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- Make it a habit to look in the back seat EVERY time you exit the car. Leave your wallet or purse as a reminder.
- NEVER leave a child in a vehicle unattended.
- ALWAYS lock the car and put the keys out of reach.
- Ask your daycare provider to call you within a few minutes if your child is late for daycare.
- Teach children that if they can't get out of the rear doors, try the front doors; and to honk the horn to get the attention of others.

If you are a bystander and see a child in a hot vehicle:

- Make sure the child is okay and responsive. If not, call 911 immediately.
- If the child appears to be okay, attempt to locate the parents or have the facility's security or management page the car owner over the PA system.
- If there is someone with you, one person should actively search for the parent while the other waits at the car.
- If the child is not responsive or appears to be in distress, attempt to get into the car to assist the child — even if that means breaking a window. Many states, including Maine, have “Good Samaritan” laws that protect people from lawsuits for getting involved to help a person in an emergency.

Know the warning signs of heatstroke, which include red, hot, and moist or dry skin; no sweating; a strong rapid pulse or a slow weak pulse; nausea; confusion; or acting strangely. If a child shows any of these signs after being in a hot vehicle, quickly spray the child with cool water or with a garden hose — NEVER put a child in an ice bath. Call 911 or your local emergency number immediately. If you are interested in learning more about heatstroke prevention, please check out the National Safety Council's free online learning courses found here: <https://carseateducation.org/general-education>

Help NHTSA and Maine Bureau of Highway Safety put an end to this preventable tragedy once and for all. For more information on vehicle heatstroke, visit www.nhtsa.gov/campaign/heatstroke. For current data, visit noheatstroke.org.

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