



NEWS RELEASE

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Hot Cars Can Be Deadly to Children

St. Luke's Children's Hospital and the City of Meridian are Joining Forces to Remind People to Not Leave Children in Cars

It may seem like just a moment, but leaving a child in an automobile in the summer heat for any length of time can quickly turn deadly.

Every year, nearly 40 children nationwide die from hyperthermia or heat stroke caused from being left in an automobile. Already this year, nine children have died in the United States, according to Safe Kids USA.

Representatives from St. Luke's Children's Hospital, the City of Meridian and Safe Kids Treasure Valley are urging parents and guardians to be extra vigilant this summer.

“With July temperatures in the Treasure Valley now settling into the 90s and higher, it has never been more important to keep a watchful eye on your children,” said Meridian Mayor Tammy de Weerd. “Please remind your children that an automobile is not a place to play and never leave your child unattended in a vehicle for any length of time. Working together we can all make sure our children enjoy a happy and safe summer.”

Many people aren't aware how quickly an automobile can heat up. Studies have shown that even on moderately hot days, temperatures can increase 30 to 40 degrees in less than 30 minutes.

And children are more at risk as temperatures increase.

“Hot cars pose a greater danger for children because a child's core body temperature increases three to five times faster than in adults,” said Dr. Kenny Bramwell, a pediatric emergency specialist with St. Luke's. “Such a rapid increase can cause permanent brain damage or even death.”

According to Meridian Police Chief Jeff Lavey “If an unattended child is located inside a vehicle, it is recommended to call 911 immediately. This is the best practice to keep children safe and get needed help on the way.”

“With medically trained personnel on every fire engine, we are able to provide immediate and needed care to children who may be in distress due to heat exhaustion or heat stroke. Getting children out of the car immediately and treated is the only way to prevent a tragedy from taking place,” said Meridian Fire Chief Mark Niemeyer.

The National Highway Transportation Safety Administration (NHTSA) offers the following tips to help protect children from Hyperthermia or Heat Stroke:

- Never leave an infant or child unattended in a vehicle even if the windows are partially open or the air conditioning is on.
- Do not let your children play in an unattended vehicle. Teach them that a vehicle is not a play area.
- Make a habit of looking in the vehicle - front and back - before locking the door and walking away.
- Always lock vehicle doors and trunks and keep keys out of children’s reach. If a child is missing, check the vehicle first, including the trunk.
- If you are bringing your child to daycare, and normally it's your spouse or partner who brings them, have your spouse or partner call you to make sure you dropped the child off.
- Ask your childcare provider to call you if your child does not show up for childcare. Do things to remind yourself that a child is in the vehicle, such as:
 1. Writing yourself a note and putting the note where you will see it when you leave the vehicle;
 2. Placing your purse, briefcase or something else you need in the back seat so that you will have to check the back seat when you leave the vehicle; or
 3. Keeping an object in the car seat, such as a stuffed toy. When the child is buckled in, place the object where the driver will notice it when he or she is leaving the vehicle.
- If you see a child alone in a hot vehicle, *call the police*. If they are in distress due to heat, get them out as quickly as possible. Warning signs may include: red, hot, and moist or dry skin, no sweating, a strong rapid pulse or a slow weak pulse, nausea or acting strangely. Cool the child rapidly by moving to an air conditioned area, applying damp cloths and providing liquids. Call 911 immediately.

For more information about the dangers of hot cars visit:

National Highway Traffic Safety Administration: <http://www.nhtsa.gov/>

Safe Kids USA: <http://www.safekids.org/>

