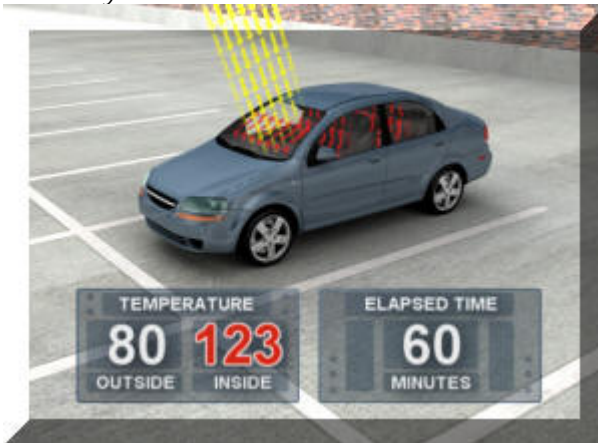


Macomb Township Fire Department

Fire and Life Safety Tips

June 2009

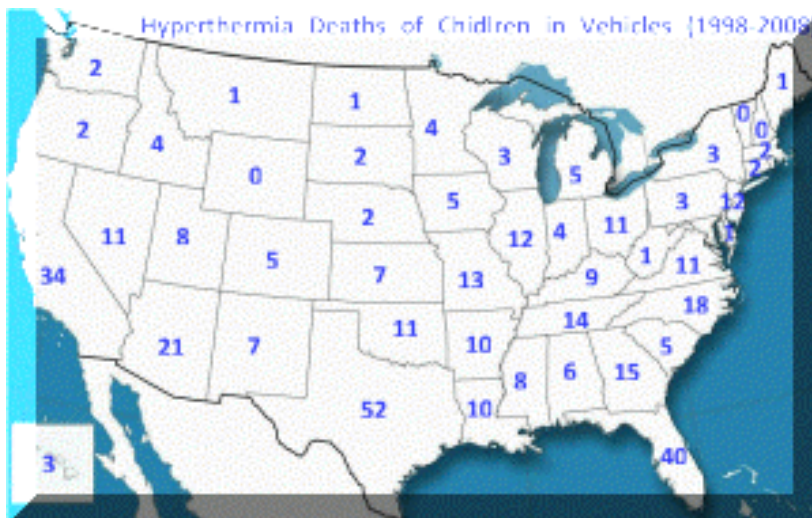
Courtesy of General Motors



(Click to see time/temperature rise in a vehicle)

HYPERTHERMIA

A friend once told me a chilling story that his earliest childhood memory was a police officer breaking the car window with his flashlight to save him from the hot car he had been left in. He was very, very lucky. Unfortunately, 418 children in the United States from 1998 – 2009 were not so lucky. It must have been horrifying for these children to cry out for help and have their cries go unanswered.



Heat is much more dangerous to children than it is to adults. When left in a hot vehicle, a young child's core body temperature may increase three to five times faster than that of an adult. This could cause permanent injury or even death.

News reporting of these incidents tends to suggest "bad" or "neglectful" parents, caregivers or drivers. In most cases, a child is extremely well-loved and doted upon; it's just a tragic ending to a forgetful episode that results in a life or lives lost. The research also revealed that more than half of these children were accidentally left behind in a closed, parked car by parents or caregivers while nearly a third of these children were trapped while playing in a vehicle unattended. One tragic story from last year happened to a family as they visited relatives. In the afternoon, their little boy asked and received permission to visit his father in the garage at the back of the property – which he did. He then told his father he was going back into the house. Along the way, the little boy decided to get into the car. Both parents thought the child was with the other parent. His body wasn't discovered until dinner.

Even running into the home or store for a "quick minute" could end horribly. What if something happened to you while you were away?

SAFETY RECOMMENDATIONS

- NEVER LEAVE A CHILD UNATTENDED IN A VEHICLE. NOT EVEN FOR A MINUTE!
- "Cracking a window" doesn't help all that much. Even with relatively cool summertime temperatures, the temperature inside a car can reach dangerous levels in a few minutes.
- Be sure that all occupants leave the vehicle when unloading. Don't overlook sleeping babies. Take your most precious cargo out of the vehicle before any packages.
- Always lock your car and ensure children do not have access to keys or remote entry devices. If a child is missing, check the car first, including the trunk. Teach your children that vehicles are never to be used as a play area.
- Keep a stuffed animal in the car seat and when the child is put in the seat place the animal in the front with the driver.
- Make a habit of placing your purse, briefcase, lunch, gym bag, etc. in the back seat. This simple act could help prevent you from accidentally forgetting a child in the car.
- Make "look before you leave" a routine whenever you get out of the car.

- Have a plan that your childcare provider will call you if your child does not show up for school.

REFERENCES

General Motors

Objects Heated by the Sun Warm Vehicle's Air

Jan Null, CCM

Adjunct Professor of Meteorology
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Hyperthermia Deaths of Children in Vehicles

Robin McClure

Deaths Rise of Kids Accidentally Left in Car

About.com

SafeKids Worldwide

Seasonal Safety – Hot Weather and Vehicles can be a Deadly Combination for Kids