

OFFICE OF THE EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT COORDINATOR



Beat The Heat, Check The Back Seat!

One of the biggest weather related risks during the summer months is the possibility of a child dying in a vehicle from heat stroke. **The temperature inside a vehicle can rise 20 degrees in as little as 10 minutes, and 50 degrees in an hour- even when outside air temperatures are in the 70's!** The inside of a car acts like a greenhouse, where actual temperatures inside the vehicle can reach 120°F in minutes and approach 150°F in as little as an hour! This can cause **hyperthermia (heat stroke)** in only minutes, particularly in children, whose body temperatures warm at a rate three to five times faster than an adult. **Studies have shown that "cracking the windows" provides little (if any) relief.**

From 1998 through 2012, 13 children had died in Oklahoma from heat stroke suffered while in a vehicle (at least 560 children had died nationwide). Nationally, over half of these (52%) were children that were forgotten by a parent or other caregiver, and 18 percent died when parents knowingly left their child in a vehicle. The rest died playing in an unattended vehicle.

All of these tragic deaths are preventable! To help bring awareness to this issue, the National Weather Service is using the slogan "Beat the Heat, Check the Backseat" to remind people to remember to check for small children in a car seat and to never leave children unattended in a vehicle- even for a few moments. **Remember that pets should also never be left in a vehicle during the summer months.**

The following are basic safety recommendations:

- **Never leave a child unattended in a vehicle. Not even for a minute!**
- If you see a child unattended in a hot vehicle, call 9-1-1 immediately!
- **If a child is missing, always check the pool first, and then the car, including the trunk.**
- Be sure that all occupants leave the vehicle when unloading. Don't overlook sleeping babies.
- Always lock your car and ensure children do not have access to keys or remote entry devices.
- Teach your children that vehicles are never to be used as a play area.
- Keep a stuffed animal in the car seat. When the child is put in the seat, place the animal in the front with the driver.
- Or, place your purse or briefcase in the back seat as a reminder that you have your child in the car.
- Make "look before you leave" a routine whenever you get out of the car.
- Ensure your child's school and/or child care provider will call you if your child does not show up for school.