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NHTSA Urges Families and Caregivers to Be Aware of Hot Car Deaths

King County, Washington: Vehicular heatstroke is the leading cause of non-crash, vehicle-related deaths for children 14 and younger in the United States. The U.S. Department of Transportation's National Highway Traffic Safety Administration urges parents and caregivers to learn and share critical information about the dangers of leaving children alone in hot cars. Help NHTSA spread the word: *Once You Park, Stop, Look, Lock.*

Since 1998, vehicular heatstroke has killed more than 1,000 children. On average, one child dies from heatstroke every 10 days in the United States from being left in a car or getting into an unlocked vehicle. While hot car deaths can happen in any month, there is typically an increase from May through September.

Hot cars are deadly: Internal vehicle temperatures can quickly rise to 50 degrees warmer than outside temperatures. Because a child's body temperature increases 3 to 5 times faster than an adult's, even a cool day outside may still pose a threat to a child.

In 2025, 31 children died due to vehicular heatstroke, a decrease from the 39 children in 2024. On average, 37 children die each year because of vehicular heatstroke. Every hot car death is preventable. Toddlers and young children are more likely to climb into a hot car and become trapped, unable to get out of the vehicle. Children "gaining access" to a vehicle account for one-quarter of hot car deaths. It is important for a parent or caregiver to teach children that the vehicle is not a playground and playing in and around a car is dangerous.

Parents and caregivers think this sort of tragedy could never happen to them, Sadly, never' does happen. Anyone can forget no matter who is taking care of the child, what their background is, or where they come from: Routines are often upended. It is during these moments of hurriedness and change in routine that many of these tragedies occur. *Once You Park, Stop, Look, Lock.*"

NHTSA urges all parents and caregivers to take three simple steps to help prevent hot car deaths. First, when getting out of a car, make it a habit to check the entire vehicle, especially the back seat, EVERY time. Second, NEVER leave a child in a vehicle unattended, even for one minute. Finally, ALWAYS lock the car and put the keys out of reach.

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