



NEWS RELEASE

ALABAMA DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH

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Avoid senseless tragedy by never leaving children alone in vehicles

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Each summer there are deaths related to heat exposure in Alabama. The extremely hot temperatures in summer should remind parents, grandparents and caregivers not to leave children unattended in vehicles. Young children are at special risk because their bodies heat up three to five times faster than adult bodies. Infants and children under age 4 are at greatest risk of heat illness and death from heatstroke.

Most of the temperature rise occurs in the first 15 to 30 minutes after the vehicle is parked. Running a car air conditioner then parking a car does not help keep the vehicle cool enough for infants and children to stay in. Even when temperatures are in the low 80's, the temperature inside a vehicle can reach deadly levels in only 10 minutes.

"Leaving the car windows partially opened does not significantly slow the heating process or decrease the maximum temperature inside," Dr. Karen Landers, assistant state health officer, said. "Leaving children unattended also puts them at risk for other dangers. Even if the engine is running and the air conditioner is on, children can experience heatstroke death and injuries. Furthermore, this puts them at risk for abduction or injury if they put the car in motion."

Children rely on parents and caregivers to keep them safe and comfortable. Make it a part of your routine to do things that remind you that a child is secured in a vehicle. Some parents and caregivers place items such as their cell phone, lunch boxes or briefcases in the back seat to ensure that no child is left behind. Ask your child care provider to contact you if the child is unexpectedly absent from child care. Be sure to lock unoccupied parked vehicles and store your keys out of children's reach to prevent them from entering a vehicle without your knowledge.

If you see a child alone in a hot vehicle, call 911 at once. A child in distress should be removed from the vehicle as quickly as possible and rapidly cooled to prevent heatstroke death or injury.

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