



Protecting Children from Vehicle Heatstroke

Dunmore: Vulnerable individuals. Heatstroke is one of the leading causes of non-crash-related fatalities among children. Each year, dozens of tragic, yet preventable, deaths occur when our nation's youth are left alone in a hot car. Often, these deaths occur when a parent forgets their children in the car or misjudges how long it takes their vehicle to reach a dangerous internal temperature. In reality, it only takes 10 minutes for a car's temperature to rise by 20 degrees Fahrenheit. This means that by the time a parent returns to their car, it may already be too late.

Every adult should know that children are up to five times more vulnerable to heatstroke than adults. For children, whose bodies heat up more quickly than adults', an internal temperature of 107 degrees is fatal.

May 15 marked one year since the governor signed into law a bill to grant civil immunity to anyone who acts in good faith to protect children left in a hot car.

If you witness a child left alone in a hot car, don't hesitate—remember that time is of the essence. Be prepared to act!

In the event that the child is unresponsive or in distress, the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration advises you to contact emergency services *immediately*. Use your better judgment to assess the situation and do whatever is necessary to help the child out of the car. Remember that you cannot be subjected to a civil lawsuit if you have called 911 and determined that immediate action was necessary to protect the child's life.

If the child is responsive, stay with them until help arrives. Where possible, have another person search for the vehicle owner.

Although most vehicle heatstrokes occur during the summer months, it's important to remember that it is possible for a child to die of heatstroke whenever the outside temperature rises above 57 degrees.

Parents should also be sure to always lock their cars at home, as children may enter a parked vehicle by themselves and may not be able to find their way out.

All vehicle heatstroke deaths among children are preventable. Before heading out for your next trip to the grocery store or post office, please take a moment to consider what you can do—either as a parent or simply as a bystander—to help keep our children safe.