

Sheriff offers hot weather safety advice

Editor's note: the following was submitted by Brown Co Sheriff John Merchant

Every year I send out an informational article to our county residents about the importance of not leaving your young/infant children in your vehicle unattended---especially with warmer temperatures coming our way. By the end of the week, temperatures are forecasted to be in the 90's. One child death is too many when it comes to this totally preventable tragedy. A few years ago I attended a safety conference and spoke with a mother who had lost her infant child due to heatstroke. She only went in to the store for a short amount of time and when she came out, her infant had perished due to the high temperatures that had escalated on a sunny day. She now regularly speaks at conferences so people can know first hand how a simple mistake has affected her life.

Parents also feel that if they leave the vehicle running with the A/C on or the windows cracked open while leaving their children in the vehicle, that is acceptable. I'm sorry to say that it is not---if the engine quit, temperature's can soar in a matter of minutes in direct sun. Best case scenario is to make sure to have an older adult or family member supervise the children or make sure to leave them with a qualified care giver or family member.

By statistic---A child dies from heatstroke about once every 10 days from being left unattended in a hot vehicle. Heatstroke is the number 1 leading cause of NON-CRASH vehicle fatalities for children under the age of 15. These types of child deaths are 100% preventable.

Vehicle heatstroke occurs when a child is left in a hot vehicle, allowing for the child's temperature to rise in a quick and deadly manner.

The Greenhouse Effect in Vehicles. The inside of a vehicle heats up VERY quickly! Even with the windows cracked, the temperature inside a car can reach 125 degrees in minutes. Cracking the windows does not help slow the heating process OR decrease the maximum temperature. 80% of the increase in temperature happens in the first 10 minutes. Children have died from heatstroke in cars in temps as low as 60 degrees

A child's body absorbs more heat on a hot day than an adult.---just because we do not feel the effects of the heat, it doesn't mean the children are o.k.

High body temperature can cause a child permanent injury or even death.

10 minutes is all the time it takes for a car to reach deadly temperatures.

Remember to NEVER leave your child alone in a vehicle--even for short periods of time.

Heatstroke is the leading cause of non-traffic, non-crash-related fatalities for children 14 and younger:

· April 2023 marks 25 years that pediatric vehicular heatstroke deaths have been tracked. By the end of 2022, alone, 30 children died due to vehicular heatstroke. The death rate has been lower in recent years, which is likely due to more families being at home and routines drastically changed.

· From 1998 to December 31, 2022, a total of 937 children died due to vehicular heatstroke, with an average number of 37 deaths each year. Of these 937 total deaths:

- o 52.6%: Forgotten by caregiver**
- o 25.3%: Gained access on their own**
- o 20.1%: Knowingly left by caregiver**
- o 1.8 %: Unknown**

SIGNS OF HEATSTROKE:

Red, hot and moist or dry skin

No sweating

A strong rapid pulse or a slow weak pulse

Throbbing headache

Dizziness

Nausea

Confusion

Being grouchy or acting strangely.

We are asking the public's assistance in helping to prevent these types of tragedies from happening. Be aware when in parking lots, garages, anywhere vehicles may be parked. Be on the lookout for any small children left unattended in vehicles. Notify law enforcement at once by calling 911, and stay with the vehicle until help

arrives.

A reminder that pets are also as susceptible to heat strokes in vehicles, just like children. All pets need a constant supply of clean fresh water, especially in the summer time.

With the higher summer temperatures on the way, we are also reminding everyone in addition to keeping an eye out for children at risk, the elderly and those with medical issues need proper care also. If you have an elderly neighbor or relative, check on them often during days with high temperatures, make sure they have fans, a/c. etc that is needed to keep them comfortable. Dehydration during the summer months is very common, especially with infants and the elderly. Regular fluid intake is a must, stay away from alcohol and caffeine---

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