

Heat is lethal threat for children in vehicles

Thursday, August 9, 2012 T-G STAFF REPORT

The death of a 5-month old boy on Tuesday after being left in a hot vehicle in Nashville is the eighth child to have died in the past six days from heat stroke inside a vehicle.

According to <http://KidsAndCars.org>, there have been at least 23 children nationwide who have died from heat stroke in vehicles so far this year, and three of these deaths have happened in Tennessee within the past week.

Last Thursday, two children were found dead inside a vehicle in Smyrna after their mother allegedly put them in the car before falling asleep inside her house.

Tennessee ranks eighth in the nation in these types of deaths with a total of 25 child deaths in hot cars since 1991. Nationwide, there have been 613 since 1991.

Heat facts

A child's body temperature rises three to five times faster than an adult's and even with the windows partially down, the temperature inside a parked car can reach 125 degrees in just minutes.

Leaving windows slightly open does not slow the heating process or lower the maximum temperature.

There are a number of factors which contribute to kids being inadvertently forgotten by their parents or care givers.

Paramount is the fact that our brains are not keeping up with the demands of our busy lives. The most common factors include a change in one's normal routine, lack of sleep, stress, fatigue, distractions and hormone changes.

When these factors combine, the ability for the brain to multi-task is diminished.

Life with newborns and small children is full of stress, sleep deprivation and distractions. And young children, especially babies, often fall asleep in their car seats; becoming quiet, unobtrusive little passengers.

The majority of parents would like to believe that they could never "forget" their child in a vehicle, but that is the most dangerous mistake a parent or caregiver can make, according to the website. In well over 50 percent of these cases, the person responsible for the child's death unknowingly left them in the vehicle.

In 54.25 percent of the circumstances, the child is unknowingly left in the vehicle while 31.58 percent of the kids got into the vehicle on their own. Almost 12 percent were knowingly left in a vehicle, while another two percent were the result of unknown circumstances.

Safety tips

KidsAndCars.org suggests the following tips:

- * Never leave children alone in or around cars, not even for a minute.
- * Put something you'll need, like your cell phone, handbag, employee ID or brief case, etc., on the floor board in the back seat.
- * Get in the habit of always opening the back door of your vehicle every time you reach your destination to make sure no child has been left behind. This will soon become habit.
- * Keep a large stuffed animal in the child's car seat when it's not occupied. When the child is placed in the seat, put the stuffed animal in the front passenger seat. It's a visual reminder that anytime the stuffed animal is up front you know the child is in the back seat in a child safety seat.
- * Make arrangements with your child's day care center or babysitter that you will always call if your child will not be there on a particular day as scheduled.
- * Keep vehicles locked at all times; even in the garage or driveway and always set your parking brake.
- * Keys and/or remote openers should never be left within reach of children.
- * Make sure all child passengers have left the vehicle after it is parked.
- * When a child is missing, check vehicles and car trunks immediately.
- * If you see a child alone in a vehicle, get involved. If they are hot or seem sick, get them out. Call 911 immediately.
- * Use drive thru services when available (restaurants, banks, pharmacies, etc.)
- * Use your debit or credit card to pay for gas at the pump.

© Copyright 2012 Shelbyville Times-Gazette. All rights reserved. This material may not be published, broadcast, rewritten or redistributed.

<http://www.t-g.com/story/1880016.html>