

## Parents encouraged to help kids be safe in and out of cars

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*A Ford Bronco crashed into the Allen home last Thursday after a three-year-old boy climbed out of his car seat and knocked the vehicle into drive. Local law enforcement are encouraging parents to follow state law and never leave a child unattended in a motor vehicle. Courtesy photo.*

When one Santaquin resident heard a big bang and then a vehicle crashed into the back of her house, she didn't quite know what to think. Little did she know that the driver of the vehicle was just 3 years old. Beth Allen was at home on Thursday, July 5, in her kitchen when she heard a loud boom.

"I looked east out of my back windows and didn't see anything," she said. "The next thing I knew a bronco crashed into the back of my house."

Luckily, the vehicle hit a post, which wasn't a support beam and then hit a wood and metal bench, which became jammed under the transmission and stopped the vehicle before it ran into the Allens' home.

The entire event began a few moments earlier when the driver of the vehicle backed up an easement road to feed her horses. The vehicle was left running with a three-year-old boy left in his car seat.

"The little boy got out of his car seat and knocked the vehicle into gear," Allen said. "After the vehicle started moving he must have grabbed the wheel and turned it to the right."

The vehicle then rolled across the road, through a fence, across a vegetable garden, through a second fence, across the cover of the Allen's underground propane tank and then into a beam on their back patio.

"The little boy became scared after the bronco started rolling, so he ran to the back of the bronco and was looking out the window and waving his arms," Allen said.

Luckily, the 3-year-old wasn't hurt and the only damage to the home was the post that was destroyed.

"If that bench hadn't stopped the bronco, it would have run into the back of our house right where our fireplace that runs off of propane is," Allen said. "It could've been a lot worse."

Allen and local law enforcement are hoping from this experience that could've ended in a tragedy, that parents will heed state laws about leaving a child unattended in a motor vehicle.

Sgt. Chris Johnson with the Santaquin Police Department refers parents to the Utah Criminal and Traffic Code Section 76-10-2202, which is the "Leaving a child unattended in a motor vehicle" statute.

"This explains every element and what it means by child is basically anybody that is younger than 9 years old," said Johnson. "It is a Class C Misdemeanor."

Between 2001 and 2010, [KidsAndCars.org](#) reports that 132 children were killed when vehicles were set in motion.

Other deaths of children being left in cars included 388 deaths from heat stroke in a car; 33 deaths from power windows; 32 deaths from a fall from a vehicle; and 24 deaths from a vehicle fire.

In Orem, Sgt. Craig Martinez estimated that his department gets roughly six calls a month regarding children left in cars. He also said that calls during the record-breaking heat of 2012 appear to be up over last year. Martinez couldn't point to a single common thread running through the various cases his department investigates, but speculated that parents may just be lazy when they leave their kids in hot cars.

"I think it's just laziness and it's not convenient," he said.

According to Martinez, temperatures in hot cars can soar 50 or 60 degrees higher than the outside air. Martinez did not know how much time a person can withstand 150 degree air, but said it wasn't very long.

With eight days of temperatures 100 degrees or higher in Utah County, parents need to be aware of how quickly the temperature inside a car can change. According to [KidsAndCars.org](http://KidsAndCars.org), "a child's body temperature climbs three to five times faster than an adult's, especially in a hot car. In less than 30 minutes, the temperature inside a car can increase 35 degrees. An infant can die in as little as 15 minutes even on a mild 75-degree day."

Allen is glad that the accident that occurred on her property didn't end in a fatality.

"I am glad that no one got hurt," Allen said. "This experience was pretty traumatic for the little boy involved, and it occurred because of a series of errors made by the adult."

For more safety tips and to learn more about keeping children safe in and around vehicles, visit [www.kidsandcars.org](http://www.kidsandcars.org).

[http://www.heraldextra.com/news/local/parents-encouraged-to-help-kids-be-safe-in-and-out/article\\_2e2e19cd-78cd-5216-afee-af2cbede1200.html](http://www.heraldextra.com/news/local/parents-encouraged-to-help-kids-be-safe-in-and-out/article_2e2e19cd-78cd-5216-afee-af2cbede1200.html)