

Event stresses danger of leaving kids unattended in vehicles, heat

By Kirsten Kraklio The Arizona Republic-12 News Breaking News Team Wed Sep 25, 2013 9:52 PM



Phoenix resident Dawn Peabody, who lost her child to being left in a hot vehicle, speaks Wednesday in Scottsdale. Kirsten Kraklio/The Republic

The death on Monday of a 1-year-old boy left in an unattended vehicle in Phoenix prompted authorities to reiterate the importance of monitoring children in heat.

Members of Phoenix and Scottsdale police and fire departments, along with the group Safe Kids of Maricopa County, held an event in Scottsdale on Wednesday to inform

the public about the dangers of leaving children unattended in vehicles, even when temperatures drop.

"It doesn't have to be 110 degrees out in order to have a heat issue inside of a vehicle," said Scottsdale Battalion Chief Chris Schibi.

According to a fact sheet from child-safety advocate Safe Kids Worldwide, even on an 80-degree day, the inside of a car can exceed 100 degrees.

High vehicle temperatures are a greater risk to children because a child's body heats up three to five times faster than an adult's, according to the fact sheet.

"Many children don't sweat like adults do. Their body doesn't react to heat the same way, so they're much more susceptible to heat," said Capt. Andy McDonald of the Scottsdale Fire Department.

Phoenix resident Dawn Peabody dedicates her time to educating other families after the loss of her young daughter, Maya, in October 2008.

After breakfast with her visiting in-laws, Peabody said, she and her husband, Wes, changed their normal routines and went separate ways.

After an hour of playing with their other children, Wes Peabody went to check on Maya and realized he had left her in the vehicle, she said.

Dawn Peabody received a frantic call from Wes and rushed to the hospital, but it was too late.

"The Arizona heat had taken our daughter's life," she said.

She works with a number of organizations to increase awareness about the dangers of unattended children.

Peabody brought a backseat buddy to the event, a stuffed cat named Lucky. Lucky was one of thousands of buddies donated by PetSmart to help eliminate such tragedies. Two buddies, Lucky and a dog named Chance, are given to new mothers as a reminder to check the backseat before leaving a vehicle.

When the child is in the backseat, they can place the buddy in the passenger seat and when the child is not in the vehicle, they can leave the buddy in the child seat as a reminder, she said.

"These types of tragedies can happen even to the best of parents," she said.

"As a parent, I couldn't just sit there," she said. "I had to make sure no other parent went through the nightmare my husband and I did."

Forty-two children perished this summer nationwide due to heatstroke, according to KidsandCars.org. Two of the deaths occurred in Arizona.

The first death in Arizona this year occurred Aug. 28 after a 3-month-old baby was left in a car in Phoenix for more than an hour.

The child's father, Daniel Gray, was charged in the death.

Earlier this week, Markale Marques died after his father, Brokale Lytte Marques, left the 1-year-old in the car for hours while he worked.

Marques is currently facing charges of second-degree murder and child abuse, officials said.

<http://www.azcentral.com/community/phoenix/articles/20130925event-stresses-danger-leaving-kids-unattended-vehicles-heat.html>