

Children Left in Cars While Parents Gamble

Scott MacFarlane Thursday, Mar 6, 2014 | Updated 11:41 PM EST

At least seven children have been found abandoned in cars outside Maryland casinos since the beginning of 2013, according to a review of state records by the News4 I-Team.

In some cases, the children were left unattended in extreme cold and sweltering heat.

The most recent cases include a child left unattended in a car at the Hollywood Casino in Cecil County in January, and a young child left alone in a car outside Maryland Live! Casino in Anne Arundel County on New Year's Eve.

In the latter case, the child's mother, Alicia Brown, was charged with abuse. Police said Brown left her 4-year-old daughter alone for eight hours in the garage, while gambling inside. The girl was found hungry, cold and crying, according to police reports.

"Unfortunately, some parents have a gambling addiction that is so strong, they will sacrifice the safety of their children by leaving them alone in a vehicle," President of KidsAndCars Janette Fennell told News4.

The News4 I-Team review found at least two children left unattended outside Ocean Downs Casino on Maryland's Eastern Shore in August 2013, when the high temperature averaged 82 degrees.

Including Alicia Brown's case, three unattended children were reported rescued from Maryland Live! Casino last year, according to the News4 I-Team review.

A separate review of court records by KidsAndCars shows more than 60 other cases of children left unattended outside casinos in the United States since 2009.

View [Reports of Children Left in Cars Outside Casinos](#) in a full screen map

Casino operators said they have developed safeguards to protect children from abandonment.

Carmen Gonzales, a spokeswoman for Maryland Live! Casino, told the News4 I-Team the casino uses a security staff of 200 officers to help prevent child abandonment.

"High-tech surveillance cameras cover just about every inch of the facility," Gonzales said. "In the event of such an incident, we immediately contact the police and work closely to support them through the investigation."

Developers of the new MGM casino in Prince George's County said they've also made plans to protect children from being left alone.

"While nothing can replace the importance of personal responsibility, we tailor our systems to the specific needs of each resort and situation, using a combination of posted officers and mobile officers on foot and bicycle patrols to provide coverage of our resorts, parking areas and grounds," MGM spokesman Gordon Absher said.



<http://www.nbcwashington.com/investigations/Children-Left-in-Cars-While-Parents-Gamble-248921491.html>