

# Woman Forgives Husband Who Left Son in Hot Car

**AP**

NEW HAVEN, Conn. — Jul 29, 2014, 7:02 PM ET By JOHN CHRISTOFFERSEN Associated Press

A Connecticut woman whose 15-month-old son died this month after her husband left him in a car on a hot day said Tuesday he's an amazing father and she forgives him.

Lindsey Rogers-Seitz, of Ridgefield, said Kyle Seitz was distraught after taking their son to a hospital. She said when she got to the hospital, she told her husband she loved him and made sure he looked at her.

"I love my husband," Rogers-Seitz said. "Of course I forgive him. But it doesn't mean that our lives aren't different now. So we have to move forward with a new different reality for us, and it's always going to be that way."

Rogers-Seitz, an attorney who also has two daughters, said in an interview Tuesday with The Associated Press that her family is grieving together.

Police say the father was supposed to take son Benjamin to day care but went to work and left him inside the car on July 7 for "an extended period of time." The temperature in western Connecticut reached into the upper 80s that day.

A police investigation is continuing, and the official cause of the boy's death has not been determined.

Rogers-Seitz declined to discuss details, citing the ongoing investigation. She said she is starting a website in her son's memory to raise awareness of the problem, saying her husband, an engineer, told her "we just cannot let any other family feel this pain."

"We're just like everybody else, and if it can happen to us it can happen to anybody," Rogers-Seitz said. "If I can give a voice to him and what has happened so that we can help others I would love to do that, because he was my joy and my heart and my soul and I miss him profoundly right now."

More than three dozen children die of hyperthermia in cars annually in the United States, and since 1998 more than 600 children have died in hot cars. Heatstroke can happen when the temperature is as low as 57 degrees, and car interiors can reach well over 110 degrees even when the outside temperature is in the 60s.

Criminal charges were filed in about half the cases of child vehicular heat stroke deaths from 2004 to 2013, according to KidsAndCars.org, a nonprofit group that tracks child deaths and injuries in and around automobiles. The group said charges were filed in 177 cases, while in 160 cases there were no charges and in 34 cases it was unclear.

Of the cases involving charges, 96 cases led to convictions and 21 cases no convictions. In 57 cases the outcome is unknown, the group said.

Of 220 cases in which a child was unknowingly left in a car, about half led to charges and at least 62 resulted in convictions, said Janette Fennell, founder and president of KidsAndCars.org.

Most cases involve good parents, Fennell said.

"It's a very, very misunderstood phenomenon," Fennell said. "This is truly an issue of our memory letting us down, not of love and caring for your children."

She said the parents end up being charged as criminals when they had no idea they had left their children behind.

"In so many cases, the parents were too emotionally and financially drained to fight the charges brought against them," she said. "In their minds, nothing could be worse than what they are already going through having lost a precious child."

In California, the Santa Clara County district attorney's office announced Monday that it would not charge a Los Gatos man who accidentally left his infant son in the rear seat of his car all day. The boy died of heat stroke.

Prosecutors said the man was extremely fatigued and mistakenly believed he had dropped off the 9-month-old at a babysitter's home on his way to work. To have criminally charged the father, prosecutors would have needed to prove he committed a reckless act rather than one resulting from inattention or mistaken judgment.

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