



**Statement by Janette Fennell, president of Kids and Car Safety
Press Conference: Grieving Families, Members of Congress, Kids and Car Safety and Advocates for
Highway and Auto Safety Call for Immediate Action to End Hot Car Tragedies
May 1, 2023**

Kids and Car Safety has been working on the topic of ending hot car deaths for over 28 years. We are the organization who actually brought this issue to the national agenda so many years ago.

OVER 1050 children have died from heatstroke in vehicles since 1990. And, another 7,300 children survived after being in a hot car with varying types and severity of injuries. Those injuries can range from a trip to the ER to be rehydrated OR such severe brain damage that they will never be able to ever walk, talk or feed themselves.

All of you have heard about and reported on various product recalls where the government and industry is quick to respond when 1 or 2 fatalities have occurred related to a particular product. These actions are important and our children deserve to be protected in this manner. But, what about our over 1050 children who have died in hot vehicles?

Though the auto industry has made an attempt to reduce these fatalities, unfortunately, their efforts are flawed. In fact, we have documented at least 5 hot car deaths that took place in vehicles that had the rear seat reminder type door sequencing system installed. And, why? Because door sequencing does not detect anything, especially the presence of a child. Additionally, this attempt has confused parents and other consumers because they actually believe that it will remind them if a child has been left unattended in a vehicle. But, this type of system does NOT detect the presence of a child. Plus, people can and have disengaged the reminder system. And, it does NOTHING to detect a child who enters a vehicle on their own which is responsible for a full 25% of hot car fatalities.

We are receiving calls and messages of congratulations from people because they truly think there's been a victory and that nothing more is needed. This is very concerning because nothing could be further from the truth.

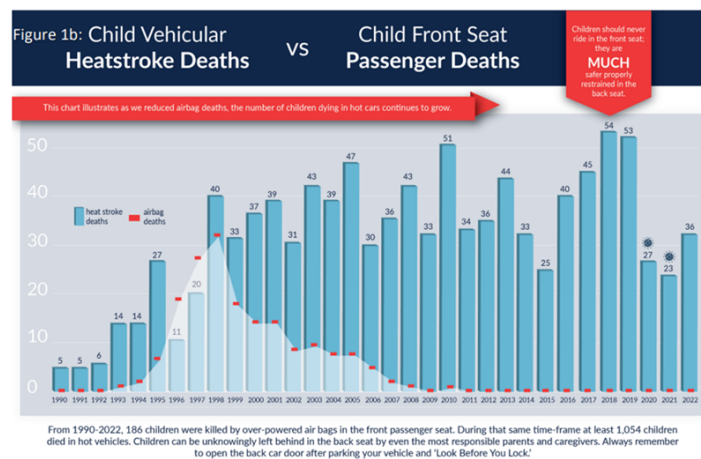
What is being propagated is NOT the answer. It gives families a false sense of security and does NOT even cover the entire vehicle or the floor wells which is a very common place where children are found. Any technology to solve this issue must cover the **entire passenger compartment**.

But, there is good news. Technology already exists that detects the presence of a child or animal alone in a vehicle and can alert the driver or people near the vehicle that someone is alone in the car. A computer chip is installed in the headliner of a vehicle that has the ability to detect even the slightest movements or breathing. It can actually tell if a sleeping baby is under a blanket and their chest is moving up and down. The system can then alert others by utilizing flashing headlights, can engage the vehicle's horn, call the driver's cell phone and/or emergency contacts, and even provide the vehicle location to 911. We have seen this technology demonstrated and it's impressive. There are already some vehicles that have this technology installed on our roads and highways today. The goal, of course is to have **this type of technology that can detect and alert installed in all vehicles.**

As a country, we are failing our children each and every day because this effective technology is not included as standard equipment in every vehicle. This same technology once it's installed can also be used for multiple other purposes...things like enhanced seat belt reminders, intruder detection and optimized airbag deployment and suppression.

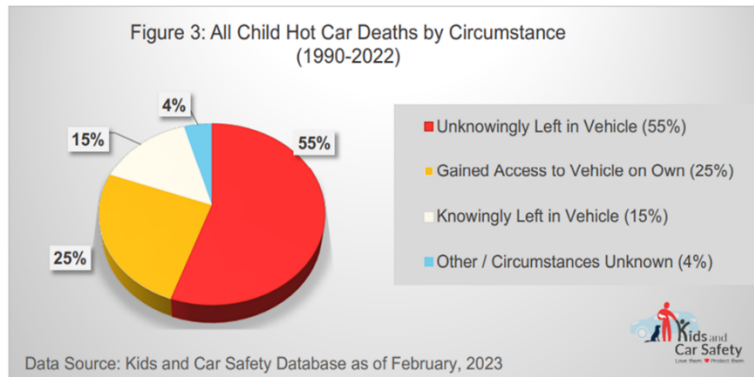
Many organizations have addressed this issue by trying to educate parents and caregivers about the dangers of leaving children alone in vehicles. Kids and Cars Safety has developed multiple education programs, PSA's, etc. about this issue. But education ALONE does NOT work. It will take an effective standard or a regulation to force compliance to help mitigate these types of issues.

We have also learned that by working with a neuroscientist like Dr. David Diamond, that people forget and they need to be reminded. I wish we had a BIG announcement today that someone has figured out a way to ensure our brains cannot forget anything. But no, we do have to continue to live with the fact that we are all still very human and no one is immune from unknowingly forgetting something. Unfortunately, love does not make your brain immune to forgetfulness. Dr. Diamond will explain how and why our 'human brains' can let us down at a time we really need it to be working perfectly for us.



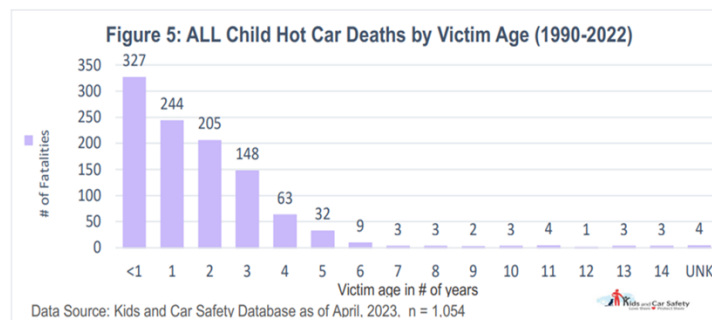
On to a few more stats. On average, 38 children die in hot cars every year in the U.S. Unfortunately, 2018 & 2019 (as you can see on the chart) were the worst 2 years in history for child hot car deaths with 54 & 53 fatalities respectively. There was a bit of a downturn in the number of hot car deaths in 2020 & 2021 most probably due to the pandemic because parents weren't taking children to daycare on their

way to work. But, unfortunately, we have seen that in 2022 that number has again jumped back up to 36 deaths last year and we have already documented 2 deaths so far this year.



There are 3 overall categories of how children die in hot cars

1. Unknowningly left 55%
2. Gained access to a vehicle on their own 25%
3. Knowingly left 15% 4% of unknown.



And, the age of our victims are very young... VERY YOUNG!

Overall 87% of the children who have died in a hot car are age 3 and younger and 54% are age one and younger. A full 32% (the largest age category) of fatalities involve infants...babies less than one-year-old. But it really isn't that surprising because we know that infants are riding rear-facing in the back seat. Rear-facing child safety seats do not look any different to the driver if they are occupied or empty, which can cause a parent to think the child is no longer in the car with them. So...put together a sleeping baby (hidden from the driver)...a simple change of routine...and parents who are totally sleep-deprived...and you have an accident waiting to happen. Everyone who has children knows that during the 1st year of a child's life, sleep deprivation can cause difficulty concentrating, feeling overwhelmed, stress, feeling tired, and trouble sleeping at night. And, because that is simply a fact, I know as a country we can do better to protect our precious little babies.

Let's talk about heat. The inside of a vehicle acts like a greenhouse and heats up very quickly. In fact, 80% of the increase in temperature happens within the first 10 minutes.

If you have an outside temperature of 85° F; in just 10 minutes the inside car temperature can jump to 104° F. And, knowing that a child's body temperature rises 3-5 times faster than an adult. These factors together create a recipe for disaster.

We simply cannot let the DOT ignore these Congressionally mandated requirements as children continue to die in hot cars. No one thinks a hot car tragedy can happen to them which is why we need effective technology as standard equipment in all vehicles as quickly as possible. It is heartbreaking to know that there are families out there right now with beautiful children who will lose them by summer's end in a preventable hot car tragedy.

Enough is Enough!

We need to DETECT TO PROTECT