

Mother of infant who died in parked car is El Paso teacher

By Daniel Borunda / El Paso Times Posted: 5/14/2013 07:10:55 AM MDT

Detectives on Monday were waiting for autopsy results to determine the cause of death of a teacher's baby who was left in a parked vehicle at Riverside High School last week, a police spokesman said.

On Friday afternoon, a 5-month-old girl died after she was found in a vehicle in the rear parking lot at the Lower Valley high school. Riverside staff performed CPR on the baby until the arrival of paramedics.

The baby was taken by ambulance to Del Sol Medical Center, where she was declared dead. The baby's mother was also taken to the hospital.

The baby's mother is Wakesha Ives, 37, a business teacher at Riverside High School.

"At this point, we are working with the authorities and the authorities have given her time to grieve and to take care of services for her daughter," Ives' lawyer Jim Darnell said Monday.

"We are working through all these issues," Darnell said. "We ask that everyone give her and the family a chance to give her a proper memorial and services for her daughter."

Darnell declined to talk about what may have led to the baby being left in the vehicle.

El Paso police spokesman Detective Mike Baranyay said he could not say why or how long the child was in the vehicle because the investigation continues. The baby's name has not been released. No charges have been filed.

Patricia Ayala, spokeswoman for the Ysleta Independent School District, said that grief counselors were at Riverside on Monday to help those dealing with the tragedy.

"The incident that took place Friday at Riverside High School was an extremely sad and tragic one for the YISD community," Ayala said in a statement. "We are heartbroken by the loss of this little angel and we send our collective thoughts and prayers to the family during this difficult time."

Child-safety advocates said that it only takes a few minutes for temperatures to become dangerously hot for young children inside a parked car. About 38 children die each year from heatstroke after being trapped in locked cars, safety advocates said.

Janette Fennell, president and founder of the child-safety group Kids And Cars, said cases where a young child is left behind in a car can happen to anyone.

"Usually, the number one indicator is a change in routine -- over 33 percent (of children who die from heatstroke in a car) are under the age of 1," Fennell said.

A new parent, lack of sleep, a quiet baby in a rear-facing child seat on the backseat and the multiple distractions of daily life can combine to form a potentially dangerous oversight, Fennell said.

"In almost all of these cases there is a similarity, the guardian or parent feel as if they already dropped the baby in day care," Fennell said. "The parent thinks the baby is being well taken care of."

Fennell said parents should use reminders -- such as placing necessities like purses, cellphones and work-entry badges next to the baby's seat.

"The worst mistake that people will make right now is saying that this will never happen to me. 'I will never forget my baby,' " Fennell said. "You will hear the vitriol and people will demonize her. The actual truth is this can happen to anyone. Doctors and lawyers and teachers and professors and rocket scientists. (In) this situation there is no race, class or religion. Our brain is an organ and it sometimes fails us."

Reminders

Child-safety advocates said that parents can use simple tricks to help them remember young children in the backseat.

-
- Put your handbag, cellphone, employee badge or something that you would miss right away in the backseat by the baby.
 - Always have a stuffed animal in the child car seat. After putting the baby in the seat, place the stuffed animal in the front seat next to you as a reminder.
 - Get in the habit of always looking in the back before you lock the car.
 - Create a policy with the child-care provider. If the baby is not there and you did not call to inform them that the baby would be absent, the child-care provider should call you and people in a contact list.
-

Source: KidsAndCars.org

Daniel Borunda may be reached at dborunda@elpasotimes.com; 546-6102. Follow him on Twitter @BorundaDaniel
http://www.lcsun-news.com/las_cruces-news/ci_23236537/mother-infant-who-died-parked-car-is-el
