

# Toddler dies after being left in vehicle in Ammon

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AMMON — Bonneville County Sheriff's officials are reminding people about the dangers of leaving children in a vehicle following the tragic death of a 21-month-old girl on Tuesday. Elizabeth Randall was left in a Honda Accord on the 600 block of South Belle Arbor Drive in Ammon on Tuesday evening, sheriff's officials said.

"When it was realized, paramedics were called and CPR was attempted," according to a news release.

Sheriff's officials said Randall was transported to Eastern Idaho Regional Medical Center, but was later pronounced dead. Sgt. Jeff Edwards said the toddler was from Bonneville County, but did not live on the street where she was found. Her parents' names were not released.

"I don't believe this was an intentional act," Edwards said. "It's a tragedy." Bonneville County Sheriff's officials are investigating the incident, and an autopsy to determine the exact cause of death is scheduled to take place on Thursday, Edwards said. Bonneville County Prosecutor Bruce L. Pickett said that is standard procedure.

"Anytime there is a death (like this) there would be an investigation and an autopsy," he said. "Once that's completed, it will be turned over to my office for review, just like any other case that had a death involved."

Although sheriff's officials haven't released much information about Randall's death, they are reminding people about the dangers of leaving children in cars.

Edwards said there hasn't been a similar death in the Bonneville County area since 1994, but the sheriff's office gets calls about unattended children and animals in vehicles a couple of times a month.

Edwards said it can be tempting for parents to leave a child in a vehicle for a few minutes, especially if they have fallen asleep. But it's also dangerous.

Amber Rollins, director of [KidsAndCars.org](http://KidsAndCars.org), which has been documenting incidents involving children left in and around unattended vehicles since 1995, said a child's body temperature rises 3 to 5 times faster than that of an adult. "Children's bodies don't regulate temperature as efficiently as adults do," Rollins said, adding that it doesn't take long for them to get heat stroke, even in cooler temperatures or a vehicle that has the windows slightly open. "Vehicles act like a greenhouse. The temperature inside heats up very quickly."

Rollins said historically, Idaho has only had six child deaths connected to heat stroke, but there have been more than a dozen who have died in hot cars throughout the U.S. this year alone.

Of all the cases [KidsAndCars.org](http://KidsAndCars.org) has documented over the years, only about 12 percent of the deaths involved children who were purposely left in vehicles, while 31 percent involved kids who got in on their own. But the vast majority — 54 percent — involved children that were accidentally left in vehicles.

"The worst thing you can do is think that it can't happen to you," Rollins said, adding that some of the most caring, loving, responsible parents in the world have accidentally left their children in the car before.

[KidsAndCars.org](http://KidsAndCars.org) officials say it's easy for parents to accidentally leave a child in the car on a busy day or one that doesn't follow the normal routine. And parents with young children are often stressed, sleep deprived and distracted. Those conditions, combined with the fact that rear-facing car seats look the same to a person sitting in the front of the vehicle whether they are occupied or not, can easily result in a forgotten child, Rollins said.

She encourages parents to keep necessary items like wallets, cell phones and other things used frequently during the day, in the back of the car so they are able to automatically check the car seat anytime they retrieve those items.

Rollins also encourages parents to develop a policy with day care providers so that they will be contacted immediately if their child doesn't show up at a scheduled time.

"So many tragedies could have been prevented with one call from the daycare," she said.

Additional safety tips can be found at [KidsAndCars.org](http://KidsAndCars.org).

Aside from heat, Edwards said there are many other dangers that can threaten children left unattended in a vehicle, including strangers and general problems that might come up.

"Why take a chance with a family member?" he said. Edwards encourages people who see a child or animal in an unattended vehicle to contact authorities. "At the minimum we can perform a welfare check on the person," he said, adding that the act could also help prevent future tragedies.