



NEWS RELEASE

KidsAndCars.org

<http://www.kidsandcars.org/>

Contact:

Janette Fennell, 415-336-9279 or Janette@KidsAndCars.org

KidsAndCars.org calls for General Motor vehicles to be recalled and retrofitted with internal trunk releases

GM's delay results in deaths of 5- and 4-year-old siblings in the trunk of a vehicle

June 18, 2009 – In the wake of two child deaths Monday in Arkansas, KidsAndCars.org* called on General Motors today to recall all models equipped with trunks from Model Years 2000-2001 and retrofit them with internal trunk releases, at no cost to the consumer.

Five-year-old Curtis Markley and his sister 4-year-old Virginia Markley of Springdale, Arkansas were found dead in the trunk of the family 2000 Chevrolet Malibu. The official cause of death has not been released, but the children appear to have perished after accidentally locking themselves in the trunk. The two children most likely died of asphyxiation or hyperthermia (heat stroke) after becoming entrapped in the trunk on a 90-degree day, Springdale police said.

“KidsAndCars.org is devastated,” says the advocacy group’s president and founder Janette Fennell. “Two beautiful little children lost their lives this week because they were unable to escape the confines of a car trunk in a GM Chevrolet Malibu. The dangers of children innocently entering the trunks of vehicles has been studied and documented for more than a decade. In less than 30 days during the summer of 1998, 11 young children lost their lives because they became entrapped in the trunks of GM vehicles. Americans were outraged and KidsAndCars.org* had just influenced legislation requiring the federal government to study the issue of trunk entrapment.”

Ford responded to the group’s awareness and prevention campaign by adding glow-in-the-dark trunk releases as standard equipment on all Ford, Mercury and Lincoln vehicles beginning with model year 2000 vehicles. Ford did not need a regulation; they acted because it was the right thing to do. Had GM chosen to voluntarily add trunk releases as Ford did at the time, these two precious children would be alive today."

“GM did nothing but talk about what they were going to do,” Fennell said. “Two children have just died because it was apparently more important for GM to look good rather than do good.”

KidsAndCars.org successfully lobbied Congress to pass a law requiring all vehicles, beginning in 2002, to be equipped with glow-in-the-dark safety release latches inside the trunk. These emergency latches are highly visible in the darkness of a closed trunk and are easy to pull, releasing the trunk latch. Last month, Fennell testified before a U.S. House subcommittee that no children or adults have died in the trunk of a vehicle with this escape mechanism. Nonetheless, literally millions of vehicles on the road today are not equipped with these simple life-saving devices.

*formerly, Trunk Releases Urgently Needed Coalition (TRUNC)

Safety tips to keep children safe

- Keep vehicles locked at all times; even in the garage or driveway.

- Keys and/or remote openers should never be left within reach of children.
- When a child is missing, check vehicles and car trunks immediately.
- Install an aftermarket trunk release mechanism.
- Teach children that trunks are only used to transport cargo and are not safe places to play.
- Never leave children alone in or around cars; not even for a minute.
- Be especially careful about keeping children safe in and around cars during busy times, schedule changes and periods of crisis or holidays.

For additional information visit www.KidsAndCars.org

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About KidsAndCars.org: Founded in 1996, KidsAndCars.org is a national nonprofit child safety organization dedicated to preventing injuries and deaths of children in and around motor vehicles. KidAndCars.org promotes awareness among parents, caregivers and the general public about the dangers to children, including backover and frontover incidents, and heatstroke from being inadvertently left in a vehicle. The organization works to prevent tragedies through data collection, education and public awareness, policy change and survivor advocacy.