



Twittercue: #Tiffany Hays representing #KidsAndCars.org speaks out for the first time about her son's #heatstroke tragedy.

NEWS RELEASE

KidsAndCars.org

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

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Texas Mom speaks out for the first time about son's death in a hot car

Expanded awareness campaigns needed to prevent child deaths in hot cars

Fort Worth, TX – Aug. 11, 2011.... Most parents think it will never happen to them. But children continue to die in hot vehicles – and parents and families across the country endure the worst nightmare imaginable.

Tiffany Hays, a courageous mother from Tyler, Texas, breaks her silence today to speak to parents and caregivers about the dangers children face when finding an opportunity to enter an unlocked vehicle. "It's too late for me and my family, but I hope by telling our story these unthinkable tragedies can be prevented," she said.

On Sept. 6, 2005, Hays' family members lay down for a nap. Unbeknownst to their parents, their sons Riley, 2, and Trystan, 3, had awakened and quietly crawled through a window, giving them the freedom to get into the family vehicle.

Trystan survived but, tragically, Riley died after becoming overcome by the stifling heat. A child's body temperature climbs three to five times faster than an adult's, especially in a hot car. In less than 30 minutes, the temperature inside a car can increase 35 degrees. Even on a mild 75-degree day an infant can die in as little as 15 minutes.

KidsAndCars.org applauds David Strickland, administrator of the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA), who has spearheaded the initiative to eliminate child deaths in hot vehicles by 2013. Administrator Strickland is bringing together Tiffany Hays, local safety advocates, health professionals, law officers and concerned residents today to discuss ways to prevent child deaths in hot cars.

Strickland's administration is holding the first listening session in Texas due to the large number of fatalities in that state. Six of the 22 child vehicular fatalities in 2011 took place in Texas. A record 49 children died last year in hot vehicles and 13 of those deaths happened in Texas.

"There is nothing that frankly is more heartbreaking and more terrifying and more psychologically damaging than losing a young child," Strickland said, calling the issue "a multifaceted problem that needs action right now."

"This is the first time a NHTSA administrator has ever decided these predictable and preventable tragedies must end," added Janette Fennell, president of KidsAndCars.org, a national nonprofit child safety organization working to prevent injuries and deaths of children in and around motor vehicles. "After so many years of carrying this torch, KidsAndCars.org is gratified to see the muscle and tremendous outreach efforts of NHTSA not only get involved, but take on a leadership role."

Based on incidents documented by KidsAndCars.org:

- 54 percent of the time children die after being unknowingly left inside a hot vehicle.
- 32 percent when children got into a vehicle on their own similar to what happened to Michael Esposito.
- 12 percent when they were knowingly left in vehicle.
- 2 percent of the circumstances were not clear.

Safety Tips from KidsAndCars.org

KidsAndCars.org provides the **BE SAFE** safety tips on an information card being distributed to new parents as part of the information packet given to them when having a baby:

Back seat – Put something in the back seat of your vehicle that requires you to open the door every time you park – cell phone, employee badge, handbag, etc.

Every child should be correctly restrained in the back seat.

Stuffed animal – Keep a stuffed animal in your child’s car seat. Place it on the front seat as a reminder when your baby is in the back seat.

Ask your babysitter or child-care provider to call you if your child hasn’t arrived on time.

Focus on driving – Avoid cell phone calls and texting while driving.

Every time you park make it a routine to open the back door of your car to check that no one has been left behind.

KidsAndCars.org provides these additional safety tips:

- Keep vehicles locked at all times, even in the garage or driveway, and always set your parking brake.
- Keys and remote openers should never be left within reach of children.
- When a child is missing, check vehicles and car trunks immediately.
- If you see a child alone in a vehicle, get involved. Call 911 or your local emergency number immediately.
- If they are hot or seem sick, get them out as fast as possible. Be especially careful about keeping children safe in and around cars during busy times, schedule changes and periods of crisis or holidays.
- Use drive-through services when available (restaurants, banks, pharmacies, dry cleaners, etc.)
- Use your debit or credit card to pay for gas at the pump.

For additional information about ways to keep children safe in and around vehicles, visit www.KidsAndCars.org

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About KidsAndCars.org: Founded in 1996 in California, 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.