

NEWS RELEASE

KidsAndCars.org

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Keyless ignition-unintended consequences can be deadly

KidsAndCars.org shares safety tips to keep families safe this winter.

December 22, 2015 - Technology is always changing and hopefully improving our lives. But, could some new technology in your car actually be putting your life at risk? Keyless ignition cars have been on the market since 2003 but it appears the dangers associated with them are now overtaking the benefits. This new design can cause serious illness or even death from carbon monoxide poisoning. Without a traditional key to turn and remove, some people forget to shut off their car engine.



KidsAndCars.org has been documenting the hazards associated with this new technology and is calling for change to make keyless ignition vehicles safer. KidsAndCars.org has documented 18 fatalities specifically attributed to keyless ignition vehicles and even more close calls. The organization has also documented an additional 80 adult fatalities and 35 child fatalities (age 14 and under) due to carbon monoxide poisoning involving vehicles that do not have keyless ignitions.

Keyless ignition systems (push-button) work by allowing drivers to start their vehicles with the push of a button when the car senses that the key fob is nearby instead of a traditional key. Many new vehicles equipped with keyless ignition systems run so quietly it's easy to forget the vehicle is still running as drivers put the vehicle into park and leave the vehicle. Furthermore, hybrid vehicles many times make no noise at all when stopped. When a car engine is left running, it spews out carbon monoxide in an attached enclosed garage and the colorless and odorless carbon monoxide fumes seep into the home.

"As more keyless ignition vehicles are sold, we are going to see these predictable and preventable injuries and deaths increase," stated Janette Fennell, president of KidsAndCars.org. Some manufacturers do have automatic shutoffs and the vehicle will shut down automatically if the key is not present. Some have audible noises that sound when you open the vehicle door if you have not shut off the engine, which can easily be muffled by the sound of a closing garage door. But, the real problem is that many vehicles do not have any audible warning systems and do not shut off automatically.

Standardization is needed so drivers will receive a distinct warning if they forget to turn off their vehicle just like they

currently receive a warning if their car key is left in the ignition. All keyless ignition vehicles should also automatically shut off if left running for a period of time. Drivers need to know what to expect when they are behind the wheel of any keyless ignition vehicle. "If you know there's a safety risk and you have an easy way to fix the problem, then why wouldn't you do it in all cars?" Fennell continued.

In 2011, the National Highway Transportation Safety Administration (NHTSA) proposed a new rule and asked for comments about keyless ignition vehicle dangers. NHTSA says costs to solve the problem are 'minimal,' yet four years later there is still no action. Injuries and deaths continue to rise.

In August 2015, 10 big automakers including Ford, GM, Hyundai, Nissan, Volkswagen, BMW, Chrysler Fiat, Daimler, Honda and Toyota had lawsuits filed against them in carbon monoxide poisoning cases. Lawsuits may get the attention of the industry.

An internationally renowned memory and brain expert, Dr. David Diamond, professor at the University of South Florida departments of psychology, molecular pharmacology and physiology, and research career scientist at Tampa Veterans Hospital, has been studying memory-related fatalities in vehicles for the past decade. Dr. Diamond's research examines how our brain memory systems break down when we're stressed or distracted by important events. "Our brain is constantly multi-tasking, which involves synchronizing different brain structures to work together in harmony," states Diamond. When life gets hectic we depend heavily on a primitive brain habit memory system, which gets us out of the car and onto the next task. But in the process, we fail to activate a different brain region which has the job of reminding us to push the ignition button. Each time we drive a car, warns Diamond, we challenge our brain memory systems to work together to function properly. But depending solely on our memory is a human factors failure which is destined to happen. When brain memory systems fail, as they do when we forget to push the ignition button upon exiting the car, we need technology to protect us, with a warning signal or an auto-shutdown process.

KidsAndCars.org suggests that drivers be particularly careful to turn off their keyless ignition vehicle. This is a serious change to our normal driving behavior after decades of being assured that our vehicles are turned off because we have the key in our hand. Please pass on our safety tips to anyone who drives a keyless ignition vehicle; it may save a life.

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Carbon Monoxide & Vehicle Safety Tips from KidsAndCars.org

Carbon monoxide (CO) is an odorless, colorless gas that is emitted by running vehicles and can quickly cause you to become disoriented, suddenly ill or even death. Below are a few tips to keep you and your family safe from this dangerous gas:

- First priority: Ensure that you have working carbon monoxide detectors in all areas of the home, especially near sleeping areas. Check batteries twice a year and replace detectors every 6-10 years.
- Never warm up a vehicle in any enclosed space.
- Never leave a vehicle running in the garage, not even with the garage door open.
- Keyless ignitions vehicles should always be double-checked to ensure the vehicle has been turned off. Even if you take the key fob with you, the vehicle could keep running.
- During busy times and changes in routine be extra cautious as distractions and multi-tasking can lead to forgetting to turn the car off, even for the fanatically detail-oriented organized person.
- Always keep vehicles locked at all times and keep keys and remote openers out of reach of children. Children may be tempted to get into vehicles to play or hide.
- NEVER leave a child alone in a vehicle, not even for a minute.

- Always clear the tailpipe of a vehicle in inclement weather conditions. If the tailpipe becomes clogged with snow or other debris, carbon monoxide can leak into the passenger compartment of the vehicle.
- Do not put children inside a running vehicle while clearing snow or ice off the vehicle.
- Do not allow children to play behind a running vehicle. This is dangerous for numerous reasons, the driver is unable to see them in the blindzone behind the vehicle and they will be exposed to the fumes coming out of the vehicle's exhaust system.

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