

# THE FACTS

Since 1970, 1,175 people have been victims in 992 incidents of trunk entrapment. Victims of trunk entrapment fall into two main categories: people who are intentionally locked in a motor vehicle trunk by a criminal, and people—usually children—who unintentionally lock themselves in a car trunk. Between twenty and twenty-five percent of all victims, and between thirty-five and forty percent of victims ages 14 and under, do not survive the entrapment episode. The incidence of trunk entrapment is vastly understated given the absence of a federal database or surveillance system.

## Deaths and Injuries

- At least 260 people, 37 of whom were children ages 14 and under, have died in 229 incidents of trunk entrapment since 1970.
- At least 19 children have died from unintentional trunk entrapment in 13 states from July 1987 to August 1998. All children involved were 6 years old or younger.
- The average age of children who have died in unintentional trunk entrapment incidents is 4 years old.
- Research indicates that children are more likely to die when trapped unintentionally than intentionally. Among children ages 14 and under, unintentional entrapments account for 43 percent of all entrapments yet 61 percent of the deaths.
- In both intentional and unintentional entrapments, younger children ages 2 to 6 are more likely to die, and older children ages 7 to 14 are more likely to be non-fatally injured.
- Hyperthermia (heat stroke) or hyperthermia combined with asphyxiation are the most common causes of death associated with unintentional trunk entrapment deaths.
- Cars parked in direct sunlight can reach internal temperatures of 131°F - 172°F, even after only 15 minutes in the sun. Younger children are more sensitive to heat than older children and adults and are at greater risk for heat stroke. The combination of high temperature, humidity and poor ventilation all contribute to the extreme danger of car trunks.
- Boys and girls have been victims of trunk entrapment in roughly equal numbers.

## How and When Trunk Entrapments Occur

- Unintentional entrapment can occur during children's games or exploration, while looking for or retrieving items from a car trunk, or while adults are performing installation or repair work inside car trunks.
- Intentional entrapment can occur as a part of a carjacking, robbery, ATM hold-up, ransom request, murder/homicide, burglary, rape, kidnapping, assault, child abduction, prank, joy ride or a combination of the above.
- The majority of known unintentional entrapment deaths have occurred during the months of July and August and in outside temperatures of 85°F or above.

### Prevention Tips for Parents

- Teach kids not to play in or around cars
- Always lock car doors and trunks, and keep the keys out of children's sight and reach.
- Supervise young children closely when they are around cars. Be especially careful when loading or unloading the trunk.
- Keep rear fold-down seats closed to help prevent kids from getting into the trunk from inside the car.



**T.R.U.N.C.**  
**(Trunk Releases Urgently Needed Coalition)**

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**As of June, 1999**

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