



Twittercue: Haley Wesley and Justin Marson tell how #heatstroke affected their families, in support of #NHTSA prevention efforts.

NEWS RELEASE

KidsAndCars.org

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

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Parents recount heartbreaking incidents to help prevent hot car tragedies

Federal government steps up efforts to eliminate child deaths in hot vehicles

Sacramento, CALIF. – Aug. 31, 2011.... Most parents think it could never happen to them. But children continue to die in hot vehicles – and parents and families across the country endure the worst nightmare imaginable.

Two California families spoke out today at a **National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA)** event in Sacramento to help others prevent the modern-day phenomena of children being unknowingly left alone in vehicles. NHTSA brought together Haley Wesley, the Marson family and local safety advocates, health professionals, law enforcement officials and concerned residents today to discuss ways to prevent child deaths in hot cars.

Hayley Wesley shared her excruciating painful story about how her family's life changed forever in May 2007. She spoke about the loss of her precious daughter, 9-month-old daughter, Maddison, in an effort to prevent these unthinkable tragedies.

"Please take extreme caution any time there has been even the slightest change in your normal daycare dropoff routine. Who would ever imagine that something as simple as an extra stop on my way to work could result in my daughter's death?" stated Wesley. "I had never even considered this possibility or been warned about how your memory can play these types of tricks," she continued. Tragically, Maddison died that day in her mother's car, overcome by the stifling heat.

Another family, the Marsons, spoke about a simple miscommunication between them regarding who would bring their daughter, SaraCorinne, in from the family van after attending a funeral that fateful day in 2008.

Miraculously, SaraCorinne survived, but she and her family face a long battle to find her the services she needs and keep her on the track to recovery. Justin Marson noted, "There is more technology in my Smartphone today than we had to land safely on the moon. The technology exists *today* that would protect our children from harm and assist those who care for them."

"How could this have happened to these caring parents?" asks 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. These were the type of parents who had been conscientious in seeking out and implementing safety recommendations.

"The KidsAndCars.org message is very clear – If leaving a child alone in a vehicle can happen to these beautiful, safety conscious, caring families, it can happen to anyone," said Sue Auriemma of KidsAndCars.org. "No one is immune."

KidsAndCars.org sponsored California's "Unattended Child in Motor Vehicle Act," (dubbed "Kaitlyn's Law" effective 1/02) which is considered the best law in the nation. This law provides a preventative approach by educating Californians about the dangers of leaving a child alone in a vehicle in the California Drivers Manual, as a rotating question the driver's test, etc.. http://dmv.ca.gov/pubs/vctop/d06_7/vc15620.htm "There have been 24 child vehicular heat stroke fatalities in 2011, but none of those were in California, and we would like to keep it that way," states Janette Fennell. A tragic record 49 children died last year in hot vehicles KidsAndCars.org reports.

The organization is pleased that Ron Medford, NHTSA deputy administrator, is spearheading efforts in California to eliminate child deaths in hot vehicles by 2013.

KidsAndCars.org has incorporated a provision as part of the reauthorization of the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, which could help prevent these inadvertent deaths. Equipping vehicles with sensors to detect the presence of the child and sound a warning when a child is left inside would help prevent these deaths when the driver's memory fails. Similar warning feat

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. KidsAndCars.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.