



**PARK. LOOK. LOCK.**

**HEATSTROKE PREVENTION NEWSLETTER**

AUGUST 2020

Thank you for joining [Safe Kids Worldwide](#), [KidsAndCars.org](#), [noheatstroke.org](#) and the [National Safety Council](#) in our mission to prevent hot car deaths.

This month's newsletter is focused on how a heatstroke tragedy can happen to anyone, even the most loving parents. Experts will tell you that our busy lifestyles create enough stress to trigger mental "lapses," which can bury a thought and cause our brains to go on autopilot. The lapses can affect something as simple as misplacing your keys or something as crucial as forgetting a baby. That's why we all need to work together, look out for each other, and continue to raise awareness to make sure no family has to experience the tragedy of losing a child to heatstroke.

This will be the last edition for the season. Please share this newsletter with others in your network, and encourage them to take action.

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**TAKE ACTION: NATIONAL DAYS OF SOCIAL MEDIA**

Please schedule today and help amplify the message.

**Sample Posts and Images**

(Download images [here](#).)

Heatstroke can happen to anyone, even the most loving and caring parents. As summer temperatures continue to soar, here are 4 ways to protect you child. #CheckForBaby #HeatstrokeKills <https://bit.ly/38T7q18>

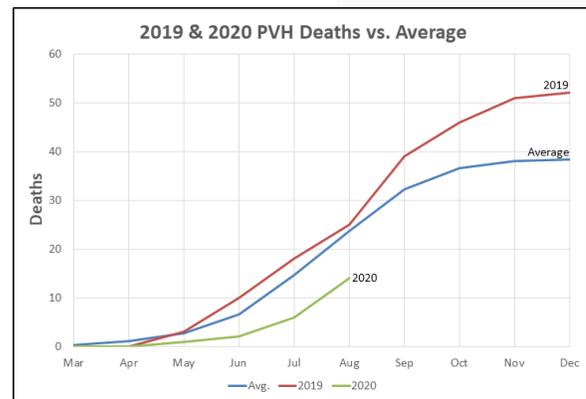
Remember to keep car doors and trunks locked and keep key fobs out of reach, so kids can't climb into cars on their own.. #CheckForBaby #HeatstrokeKills

If you see a young child alone in a car, call first responders at 911. They are trained to respond to these situations. One call could save a life. #CheckForBaby #HeatstrokeKills



## TRENDS

Besides telling you whether to pack an umbrella or sunscreen for your next outing, broadcast meteorologists play an important role as “Station Scientists”. In doing so, they are often called upon to explain everything from earthquakes to locust invasions. And sometimes they are asked questions like “how hot could it have gotten in that car” or “how often does this happen” when there is a local Pediatric Vehicular Heatstroke (PVH) tragedy. (This is exactly how I became involved in the topic almost 20 years ago. See <https://www.noheatstroke.org/FAQ.htm#1>)



To address this, on July 22, 2020, a webinar was held for broadcast and other meteorologists. The three meteorologists who spoke were Jan Null (Adjunct Professor of Meteorology at San Jose State University and founder of <https://www.noheatstroke.org/>), Jim Cantore (35-year veteran meteorologist at the Weather Channel, <http://weathergroup.com/company/bios/jim-cantore>) and Dr. Michelle Hawkins (Branch Chief overseeing the heat programs at the National Weather Service). [https://www.weather.gov/careers/chemistry\\_michelle\\_hawkins](https://www.weather.gov/careers/chemistry_michelle_hawkins)). Safe Kids provided a video of the webinar at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZMNpbSyA44Q>.

Through the first ten days of August, there have been 15 documented PVH deaths across the country. The 1998-2019 average is 27 by this date. While any number of these fatalities is too many, one of the few silver linings from the pandemic is that rate of PVH tragedies remains at about half (56%) of average, and 44% of the number through August 10, 2019.

Submitted by [noheatstroke.org](https://www.noheatstroke.org).

## RESOURCES

### How Can This Happen?

While there are three primary circumstances that typically lead to pediatric vehicular heatstroke or children dying in hot cars, a little more than half of all heatstroke deaths over the last 20 years have resulted from children being unknowingly left in a vehicle.

Among those who have experienced this tragedy, it is commonly reported that a parent or caregiver loses awareness of the presence of a child in the back seat. Simply put: The driver exits the vehicle and the child is left behind. [Dr. David Diamond](#) helps us understand how this can happen, even among loving and attentive parents and caregivers. He explains in two separate resources available on [cpsboard.org/heatstroke](https://cpsboard.org/heatstroke) how this “incomprehensible lapse in memory” can happen and why it exposes children to hazards such as heatstroke.

Articles:

- [Children dying in hot cars; a tragedy that can be prevented](#)
- [When a child dies of heatstroke after a parent or caregiver unknowingly leaves the child in a car; How does this happen and is it a crime?](#)

Another well-known article is [Fatal Distraction](#), a Pulitzer Prize-winning article written by Gene Weingarten and published by *The Washington Post*.

Time after time, a change in routine, stress, fatigue, and distraction play a role when a child unknowingly is left in a vehicle. This is why we are all encouraged to make it a habit of checking the back seat of our vehicles before locking and walking away, even if you know you did not have a child with you. That way this practice of checking the back seat will become routine, so that even when we shift into autopilot mode we are more likely to check the back seat, and hopefully prevent one more child from experiencing this preventable cause of death.

For more information, consider completing the easy, free online learning opportunity available from the National Safety Council: [Children in Hot Cars](#), also available in [Spanish](#). In addition, ask anyone who will be transporting children to complete this life-saving training.

Submitted by the [National Safety Council](#)

## **FAMILY STORY**

**Written by Eric Stuyvesant, KidsAndCars.org, Parent Advocate**

### **A simple change in routine almost cost my son's life...**

I am a creature of habit. I suppose most of us are. I work best when I know exactly where I am going and what I'm doing simply because I have done it a hundred times before.

On the morning of Wednesday, June 10, 2015, I made a very simple adjustment to our schedule – rather than drop Michael off at daycare and take my wife, Michelle, to work I chose to reverse it. Michelle had been running late for work so we headed towards Irving, TX where she worked. On the way home I took a couple of phone calls while Michael slept in the back seat. I got to thinking about the other stuff, the admittedly 'not so important' stuff – but it seemed important at the time. I pulled in our driveway at 9:30 am and went inside to plan out my work day and eat breakfast.

An hour and fifteen minutes later, I horrifyingly remembered that we hadn't stopped by the babysitter's home. It was that simple change in routine that nearly cost us our son.

When I got to Michael, he had very labored breathing. His pretty blue eyes had turned gray and were rolling back in his head. He was absolutely drenched in sweat. I snatched him out of the van, screaming my head off and rushed into the house. We jumped in a cold shower, as cold as I could make it, in all our clothes. My older sons worked together to contact Michelle and call 911 – those two young men are my heroes. There were a couple of points where Michael started to leave us. Verbal encouragement and CPR kept him hanging on until EMS arrived on the scene – more heroes.

When we arrived at the hospital Michael's temperature was 104 degrees after being in a cold shower and being cooled by the EMTs. We don't know how hot it got inside the car but the temperature outside was 80 degrees.

My sweet boy was intubated, put into a medical coma and paralyzed so that he wouldn't fight the tubes allowing his body to rest. They had cooling pads on him to help bring his temperature down. For the next 2 days his temperature stayed over 100 degrees.



Miraculously, his organs did not shut down, his heart stayed strong “doing just what it was supposed to do,” his EKG showed regular brain activity for someone who was in a coma and on Saturday morning the decision was made to wake him up. It took 12 hours but finally he started to grab and pull at the intubation tube. He was disoriented and angry but breathing on his own. By the next morning he was rolling over trying to move and get comfortable. We started OT and PT that very day and continued for 5 more weeks 6 times a day.



Michael suffered 6 strokes. Just an hour and 15 minutes...that’s was all it took to damage his cerebrum, cerebellum and hippocampus affecting his motor skills, behavior and memory. Despite the injuries, his doctors said they saw no reason a full recovery wasn’t possible. I thank them for that encouragement. It made it easier to get up each morning and keep going.

The odds of a child surviving a hot car incident are extremely low. It is a very rare occurrence that one makes it through alive - especially in Texas. It is even rarer to have a survivor with no measurable or permanent damage. At a recent doctor’s appointment, I was bemoaning the fact that there are not a lot of people I can speak to who can with any degree of assurance say “This is what you can expect next...” I think my wife and I were both floored when the Dr. said “Don’t you get it? Michael is the baseline.”

I know you’re asking, “Eric, how the hell can you forget your child?” I still ask myself that very question. I don’t have an answer. I wish I did - I still wake up in the middle of the night scared to death I’ve left him somewhere, frantically retracing the day’s steps - it’s not until I go into his room and see him peacefully sleeping that I am able to breathe.

Nothing like this could have ever happened to me -- until it did. In fact, I was ‘one of those people’ who proclaimed that people who left children alone in vehicles may not be very good parents. One minor change in our morning routine was all it took for me to lose awareness that Michael was in the back seat and hadn’t already been dropped off.

If you take anything from our story, always make sure you check the back seat. I don’t mean just glance into the back seat after you turn off your vehicle. You need to physically get out of the car, open the back door and check to make sure no one or nothing has been left behind. [Always Look Before You Lock](#). Whether you believe it or not...IT COULD HAPPEN TO YOU, too.

Until we have [technology available in all vehicles](#) that can detect the presence of children inside the vehicle, all children are at risk of being unknowingly left or getting into a vehicle on their own. Please don’t let this happen to your family.

Please read and share the KidsAndCars.org safety information to protect your precious little ones.

<https://www.kidsandcars.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/01/Heatstroke-fact-sheet.pdf>



Submitted by [KidsAndCars.org](#)

## EVENTS

KidsAndCars.org hosted an International [virtual press conference](#) and Congressional briefing on July 28th to demonstrate how available technology can prevent hot car deaths and injuries. Speakers included Senator Richard Blumenthal (D-CT), Representative Jan Schakowsky (D-IL), Dr. Shaun Kildare from Advocates for Highway and Auto Safety, KidsAndCars.org's president Janette Fennell and KidsAndCars.org's Parent Advocate Jenny Stanley.

The International virtual event confirmed that this type of technology is readily available and affordable from Vayyar™ Imaging, Aptiv, Caaresys™ and IEE Sensing Inc. All of the systems demonstrated are able to detect the presence of a child (or other occupant) inside a vehicle whether they were left alone or got in on their own and provide alerts both inside and outside the vehicle. All event speakers addressed the need to enact the [Hot Cars Act](#) requiring a safety standard to be issued and that the voluntary agreement issued by automakers is not sufficient to [effectively save lives](#).

The video of the press event is currently available online. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eSjGJUPveo8&feature=youtu.be>

