



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

July 31, 2013

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## **State Agencies and Organizations Urge All Kansans to Help Protect Children from Heatstroke**

*Hot Cars Can Quickly Become Deadly for  
Children*

Topeka – Hot summer days across the United States have contributed to at least 24 child deaths this year from heatstroke when children were left unattended in vehicles. Safe Kids Kansas, the Kansas Department of Transportation (KDOT) and the Kansas Department for Children and Families (DCF) are joining together to observe National Heatstroke Prevention Day on July 31, and remind caregivers to never leave children alone in cars. As determined advocates in preventing childhood injury, these partners are working to together to educate parents and caregivers with tips to avoid these tragedies.

"As these tragedies continue to occur, Kansas partners are intensifying our efforts to get the message out that the inside of a vehicle is an extremely dangerous place for a child alone in hot weather," said Cherie Sage, Safe Kids Kansas. "Even on a mild day, the inside of a car can reach deadly temperatures within 10 minutes. This is a place no child should be alone, and because children's bodies heat up three to five times faster than adults', they are much more susceptible to heatstroke."

Most people assume this would never happen to them, but in over half of all cases, the parent or caregiver "misremembered." That is, they believed their child had been dropped off and were safe with a care provider, unintentionally leaving them in the vehicle. It has happened to caring and responsible families from all walks of life. "Fatal Distraction," Gene Weingarten's Pulitzer Prize-winning article in The Washington Post at <http://ow.ly/ldDwU>, explains how these heartbreaking and preventable tragedies can happen to anyone.

"Heatstroke can happen more quickly than you might think," said Secretary Phyllis Gilmore, Kansas Department for Children and Families. "We don't want to see this happen to any family. That's why we are asking everyone to help protect kids by never leaving children alone in a car, not even for a minute."

The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration's "*Where's baby? Look before you lock*" campaign urges parents and caregivers to take important precautions to prevent inadvertent incidents from occurring:

- Never leave a child unattended in a vehicle – even if the windows are partially open or the engine is running and the air conditioning is on.
- Make a habit of looking in the vehicle – front and back – before locking the door and walking away.
- Ask the childcare provider to call if the child does not show up for care as expected.
- Do things that serve as a reminder a child is in the vehicle, such as placing a purse or briefcase in the back seat to ensure no child is accidentally left in the vehicle, writing a note or using a stuffed animal placed in the driver's view to indicate a child is in the car seat.
- Teach children a vehicle is not a play area. Lock vehicles and store keys out of a child's reach.

“If you see a child alone in a car, call 911,” said Chris Bortz, Kansas Department of Transportation. “Emergency personnel are trained to respond to these situations. One call could save a life.”

This information can be made available in alternative accessible formats upon request. For more information about obtaining an alternative format, you may contact Safe Kids Kansas at 785-296-1223, or [csage@kdheks.gov](mailto:csage@kdheks.gov). Both speech/hearing disabled and hearing Kansans can access the Kansas Relay Center by calling toll-free 1-800-766-3777. Callers should inform the relay operator of the number they wish to call and the type of call they are making direct, credit card, collect, person-to-person, etc.

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