

Safe Kids Monterey County Joins National Health and Safety Partners to Eliminate “Forgotten Child” Deaths

Salinas, CA — As Spring approaches, bringing with it warmer temperatures, Safe Kids Monterey County is working to increase awareness and urge caregivers to never leave children alone in a vehicle. Unfortunately, though it is only March, the first heat stroke fatality has already occurred. With the goal of having no more children die from heat stroke when they are “forgotten” in cars, safety experts and child advocates remind parents and caregivers to always check for sleeping children before leaving a vehicle.

Between 1998 and 2009, 445 children died from heat stroke because they were unattended in vehicles that became too hot for them to survive. “A child’s body heats up 3 to 5 times faster than an adult’s and unattended children have no way of protecting themselves in a hot vehicle” says Dave Crozier, Safe Kids Monterey County coordinator. “The overall goal of the campaign we are launching today is to make sure no more children will die in 2010 because they were unattended in a vehicle. We want parents and caregivers to take precautions so that this tragedy does not happen to them.”

More than 50 percent of the children who died from heat stroke were forgotten by a caring adult who became distracted when they left the vehicle. When left unattended by an adult, thirty percent of affected kids gained entry into an unlocked vehicle, became trapped and were overcome by heat. It takes only minutes for a child to be at risk of death and serious, permanent injury in a hot car. Drivers must keep car doors locked and keys out of reach from young children.

Safe Kids Monterey County urges all adults who transport children to take the following steps:

- Call 911 if they see a child unattended in a vehicle.
- Never leave children alone in a car - even for 1 minute.
- Set your cell phone or Blackberry reminder to be sure you drop your child off at daycare.
- Set your computer “Outlook” program to ask you, “Did you drop off at daycare today?”
- Place a cell phone, PDA, purse, briefcase, gym bag or whatever is to be carried from the car on the floor in front of the child in a back seat. This forces the adult to open the back door and observe the child.
- Have a plan with your child care provider to call if your child does not arrive when expected.
- Keep keys and remote entry key fobs out of children’s reach.
- Lock all vehicles at all times.
- Check cars and trunks first if a child goes missing.

For more information on preventing hyperthermia deaths, please call Safe Kids Monterey County at 831-759-6675 or visit www.ggwweather.com/heat and www.safekids.org/nlyca. Be sure to NEVER LEAVE YOUR CHILD ALONE in a car.

Safe Kids Monterey County works to prevent unintentional childhood injury, the leading cause of death and disability to children ages 1 to 14. Safe Kids Monterey County is a member of Safe Kids Worldwide, a global network of organizations dedicated to preventing unintentional injury. Safe Kids Monterey County was founded in 1989 and is led by the Monterey County Sheriff’s Office.

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