

Health Department, CYFD to parents: Don't leave kids in hot cars

Written by New Mexico Department of Health
Friday, 26 June 2015 01:41



SANTA FE—The New Mexico Department of Health (NMDOH) and the Children's Youth and Families Department (CYFD) urge New Mexico parents and caregivers to never leave a child alone in a car.

Nine children have died in New Mexico from heatstroke after being left in hot cars since 1998. Safe Kids Worldwide reports an average of 37 children have died in hot cars each year in the U.S. in that same time period. Of those lives lost, 53 percent resulted from adults intentionally or unintentionally leaving children unattended in automobiles. An additional 47 percent resulted from children gaining access to unlocked vehicles without supervision.

"We don't want to see this tragedy happen to any family," said DOH Cabinet Secretary Retta Ward, MPH. "That's why we're asking everyone to help protect kids; never leave a child alone in a car, not even for a minute. It may be tempting not to 'wake the sleeping baby' for a quick trip inside the store, but that puts the child's life at risk."

The New Mexico Department of Health leads Safe Kids New Mexico, a coalition which provides staff, operational support and other resources to assist in keeping kids safe.

According to Safe Kids New Mexico, even when it is cool, cars can heat up to dangerous temperatures very quickly. Even with the windows cracked open, interior temperatures can rise almost 20 degrees Fahrenheit within the first 10 minutes. Anyone left inside is at risk for serious heat-related illnesses or even death, but it is children who are left unattended in parked cars who are at greatest risk.

"When it comes to ensuring the safety and well-being of our children we need to always be vigilant of our surroundings," said CYFD Secretary Monique Jacobson. "There is never a good reason to leave a young child unsupervised in a motor vehicle, especially during extreme

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weather.”

CYFD , NMDOH, and Safe Kids New Mexico encourage everyone to help reduce the number of deaths from heatstroke by following these simple tips:

- Place your purse, wallet, glasses, cell phone or anything you always need on the back seat so you'll look for them every time you get out of the car.
- Never leave a child unattended in a vehicle, even with the windows slightly open.
- If you see a child alone in a car and they appear flushed or non-responsive, the car is locked, and you cannot immediately find the parents or caregivers, call 911 immediately.
- Teach children not to play in any vehicle; keys and/or remote openers should never be left within reach of children.
- Watch children closely around vehicles, particularly when loading and unloading. Check to ensure all children leave the vehicle when you reach your destination.
- Make it a habit to always open the back door of your vehicle every time you reach your destination to make sure no child has been left behind.
- Keep vehicles locked at all times; even in the garage or driveway and always set your parking brake.
- When a child is missing, check vehicles and car trunks first and immediately.

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Visit the Department's Heat Stress page for more information on heat-related illness.