



In partnership with The University of Texas Health Science Center at San Antonio

For Immediate Release

Hot Weather and Hot Cars Deadly Combination for Children

At least 41 Texas Children Dead from Hyperthermia Since 1998

SAN ANTONIO, April 26 – At least 41 Texas children have died from heat stroke in the last nine years after being left alone or trapped in a closed vehicle.

“Every one of these tragedies is avoidable,” said Dr. Ronald Stewart, University Hospital Trauma Director, and Trauma Division Chief, at the University of Texas Health Science Center at San Antonio. “We hope by getting the Never Leave Your Child Alone message out now, before the heat really sets in, that lives can be saved.”

Stewart spoke at a news conference sponsored by University Health System, Safe Kids Worldwide and General Motors.

Six Texas children died in 2006 from hyperthermia, more than any other state and twice as many as killed by tornadoes. The 41 Texas children killed by hyperthermia since 1998 led the nation and ranged in age from 2 months to 6 years old.

More than 320 children have died nationwide in the same period, most of them under 3 years of age, according to statistics compiled by Jan Null, Adjunct Professor of Meteorology at San Francisco State University.

A child’s physiology and hot temperatures can be a deadly combination in just minutes.

“The inside of a vehicle can rise 19 degrees above the outside temperature in just 10 minutes,” said Wes Bender, Safe Kids Buckle Up regional manager for Safe Kids Worldwide, GM’s partner in child passenger safety programs. “After an hour, the temperature inside and outside temperature can differ by 45 degrees or more – even if the window is left open a crack.”

“Children are more susceptible to heat stroke than adults because their bodies warm at a rate three to five times faster than adult bodies do,” said Null. “Heat stroke occurs when the core body temperature reaches 104 degrees Fahrenheit. A core body temperature of 107 degrees Fahrenheit is considered lethal.”

The Texas fatalities have occurred in outside temperatures between 73 F and 106 F.

“Safe Kids Worldwide and General Motors created the Never Leave Your Child Alone program to educate families on the dangers kids face in hot vehicles,” said Beth Lowery, GM vice president of Environment, Energy and Safety Policy.

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“A child is our most precious cargo and drivers must know that these deaths and injuries are entirely preventable,” she said. “My heart goes out to every family that has lost a child or children in this way. No one ever thinks it would happen to them, and that is why this message cannot be repeated too often.”

Safe Kids suggests these tips for parents and caregivers:

- Teach children not to play in, on or around vehicles.
- Never leave a child unattended in a vehicle, even with the window slightly open.
- Always lock a vehicle’s doors and trunk – especially at home. Keep keys and remote entry devices out of children’s reach.
- Place something that you’ll need at your next stop – such as a purse, lunch, gym bag or briefcase – on the floor of the backseat where the child is sitting. This simple act could help prevent you from accidentally forgetting a child.

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