



# The Dangers of Leaving Children & Pets in Hot Vehicles

You might think you don't need to read this article because your children are grown and you don't have any pets, **BUT WAIT!** Don't you ever have to transport someone else's children or pets? Maybe you have grandkids, nieces or nephews, or perhaps you may have to help out a neighbor or friend. Knowledge is power, and just because you think this information might not pertain to you...maybe **you** will be the one to save someone; a child/pet in need or a parent/caregiver lacking the knowledge to take care of their children and/or pets.

Do you think that the only time a child is in danger of being left in the car is during those hot summer months with the temperatures soaring into the 90's and 100's? In reality, **many deaths have occurred when the outside temperature has been only 60-70 degrees.** Hard to believe isn't it?

Did you also know that a child's core body temperature can heat up 3 to 5 times faster than that of an adult's? It only takes a few short minutes before a child can become dangerously overheated. Every year, more than 30 children die because they are left alone in a car.

**Some people don't take hyperthermia seriously, but so far, 20 kids have died this year!**

*As of July 1, 2010, there have been 20 U.S. deaths of children left in cars, down 13 from last year's 33 deaths. From 1998-2010, 465 deaths have occurred. The circumstances of the deaths between 1998-2009 (443) are as follows: <sup>1</sup>*

- \* 51% - child "forgotten" by caregiver (228 children)
- \* 30% - child playing in unattended vehicle (131)
- \* 18% - child intentionally left in vehicle by adult (80)
- \* 1% - circumstances unknown (4)





A car's temperature can increase by 19 degrees in only 10 minutes, and will continue to rise as time goes on. According to an article by Safe Kids USA, there is no evidence that cracking the windows helps keep a car cool. In fact, the article goes on to say that, sunshine coming through the car windows makes the car work like an oven.

Make it a point to **never** leave a child or pet alone in a car, even for one minute; and really... is it ever *really one minute*? Let's say you go into the store for a few items, but when you get there you can't locate what you really need so now you have to make a substitute and you're not really sure which one of the many others you will select from. Or maybe there is only one cashier working and a line of nine people ahead of you. Maybe the cashier's register locked up and now she/he has to locate a manager on duty to unlock the register. Sound familiar? My point? **There is never really a one-minute stop – anywhere.**



### Tips from Safe Kids.org

- *Dial 911 immediately if you see an unattended child in a car. EMS professionals are trained to determine if a child is in trouble.*
- *Never leave a child unattended in a vehicle, even with the windows slightly open.*
- *Place a cell phone, purse, briefcase, gym bag or whatever is to be carried from the car on the floor in front of the child in a backseat, or place it alongside the child seat. This triggers adults to see children when they open the rear door and reach for their belongings. (This is mainly for those who don't normally transport children and are not accustomed to*

getting anyone else out of the car when exiting – forgetting they have a child in the back.)

- Teach your children not to play in any vehicle.
- Lock all vehicle doors and trunk after everyone has exited the vehicle – especially at home. Keep keys out of children's reach. Cars are not playgrounds or babysitters.
- Check vehicles and trunks FIRST if a child goes missing.



## P E T S

And of course, it goes without saying; **never leave your animals alone in a parked vehicle** in the warm months. The inside of a car can reach 120 degrees in a matter of minutes even if you are parked in the shade. On a warm day, temperatures inside a vehicle can rise rapidly to dangerous levels. On an 85-degree day, for example, the temperature inside a car with the windows opened slightly can reach 102 degrees within 10 minutes. After 30 minutes, the temperature will reach 120 degrees. Dogs and cats can't perspire and can only dispel heat by panting and through the pads of their feet. Pets that are left in hot cars even briefly can suffer from heat exhaustion, heat stroke, brain damage, and can even die. If you see an animal in distress in a parked car, contact the nearest animal shelter or police.

Furthermore, **leaving pets unattended in cars in extreme weather is illegal** in several states. Here in California, Penal Code 597.7(a) of the Animal Codes Handbook – Animal in Unattended Motor Vehicle – reads: “No person shall leave or confine an animal in any unattended motor vehicle under conditions that endanger the health or well-being of an animal due to heat, cold, lack of adequate ventilation, or lack of food or water, or other circumstances that could reasonably be expected to cause suffering, disability or death to the animal.”





### **PETS - LET'S REVIEW:**

**5 points we would like you to remember:**

1. Dogs and cats are especially vulnerable to heat-related illness because they can only cool off by panting and through the pads in their feet.
2. Even on seemingly mild days, an enclosed car can be deadly. In a Stanford University study, when it was 72 degrees outside, a car's internal temperature climbed to 116 degrees within one hour.
3. A dog's normal body temperature is between 101 to 102.5 degrees; a dog can only withstand a high body temperature for a short time before suffering nerve damage, heart problems, liver damage, brain damage or even death.
4. Studies show that cracking the windows has little effect on a car's internal temperature.
5. It's illegal.

Warmer days are here in the valley and I hope that you pay close attention to your precious ones when running your errands. Remember, they are counting on you for their safety and protection.



<http://www.safekids.org/safety-basics/safety-spotlight/hyperthermia/>

## **RESOURCES**

<sup>1</sup>Dept. of Geosciences @ [www.ggweather.com](http://www.ggweather.com)

<http://www.ggweather.com/health>

<http://www.safekids.org>

<http://www.youtube.com>

<http://www.aspca.org>

<http://www.humanesociety.org>

<http://www.uan.org>

## **GRAPHICS:**

[www.hometowntimes.com](http://www.hometowntimes.com)

<http://www.safekids.org>

<http://www.uan.org>

[www.momlogic.com](http://www.momlogic.com)

[www.hometowntimes.com](http://www.hometowntimes.com)

[www.juniormemorychampionship.com](http://www.juniormemorychampionship.com)

[www.smartcode.com](http://www.smartcode.com)

[www.images.publicradio.org](http://www.images.publicradio.org)

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[www.kingscountyoe.com](http://www.kingscountyoe.com)