



# COUNTY OF SAN DIEGO NEWS RELEASE

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**CONTACT:** Tom Christensen (619) 515-6535

## **WOULD YOU PUT YOUR CHILD IN AN OVEN? *County Officials Warn of Dangers of Leaving Children or Pets in Hot Vehicles***

As the hot temperatures continue through the summer months in San Diego County, children or pets left unattended in vehicles, even for a few minutes, are at extreme risk for hyperthermia and heat exhaustion, which can lead to organ failure and death.

A safe summer begins with simply paying attention. Temperatures inside vehicles can rise by as much as 29 degrees in 20 minutes, making the inside of a car deadly for a child or pet.

County officials are reminding residents not to leave children or pets unattended in vehicles under any circumstances. It's against the law and carries a fine of \$100 and criminal charges if the child is injured.

"Being attentive and planning ahead can avert a needless tragedy," said County of San Diego Supervisor Pam Slater-Price, Third District, at a news conference in front of the County's Health and Human Services Agency (HHSA). She was joined by Dr. Wilma Wooten, County Public Health Officer; Mary Harris, Director of HHSA's Child Welfare Services; Dawn Danielson, Director of the County's Animal Services, parents, babies, dog owners and their pets.

"You should never let a child or pet sit unattended in a vehicle, not even to run a quick errand. A car should never be a babysitter," added Slater-Price.

It only takes a few minutes for the temperature inside a vehicle to become dangerously hot. Within an hour, the temperature inside can be more than 50 degrees hotter than the temperature outside.

Heatstroke begins to occur when the core body temperature reaches 104 degrees Fahrenheit; 107 degrees is considered lethal.

"A child's body cannot regulate its temperature as an adult's can. Their core body temperature also rises 3 to 5 times faster than an adult," said Dr. Wooten. "In a matter of minutes, the inside of a car feels like an oven, even with the windows cracked open. If you see a child inside a car unattended it's extremely important that you immediately call 9-1-1."

**(more)**

HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES AGENCY  
1700 PACIFIC HIGHWAY, ROOM 203 • SAN DIEGO, CA 92101-2472



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Symptoms of heatstroke, according to Dr. Wooten, include red, hot and dry skin without visible sweating, a rapid pulse, headache, dizziness, nausea and vomiting, confusion and unconsciousness. Without proper immediate treatment, heatstroke can become fatal.

Seventy-eight children have died in the U.S. this year because they were left unattended in a vehicle. Of those, 15 died from vehicular hyperthermia, including two in California. Vehicular hyperthermia has killed 335 children in the last 10 years.

Parents and caregivers can take a few simple, yet critical precautions to ensure tragedies like these don't happen in San Diego County.

"Horrible accidents can unfortunately happen in the blink of an eye," said Harris. "Adults should ensure that vehicles are locked at all times and keys are kept away from children. They should make sure kids know that vehicles are not playgrounds and that they know where their children are at all times."

Children are not the only ones in danger when left inside cars. Pets, especially dogs, also face an extreme risk when left unattended in vehicles as they can be very susceptible to high temperatures.

"Many people don't realize how quickly their car becomes too hot for a pet," said Danielson. "Pets need adequate shade and plenty of fresh drinking water. A parked vehicle can quickly become a death trap for a beloved family pet."

If you see a child left unattended in a vehicle, you are urged to immediately call 9-1-1. To report a pet in danger, call County Animal Services' emergency number at (619) 236 2341.

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