



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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Departments Warn of Danger of Leaving Children Unattended in Vehicles

PITTSBURGH – With the beginning of summer, the Allegheny County Departments of Health, Human Services and Allegheny County Emergency Services today reminded residents to never leave children alone in a vehicle, which can prove deadly after only a few minutes.

“As summer approaches and warmer temperatures are upon us, parents and guardians must remember that it is never okay to leave an unattended child alone in a car,” said Health Department Director Dr. Karen Hacker. “In only 10 minutes, a car’s temperature can rise more than 20 degrees. Children are at a much greater risk to heatstroke than adults, and it is one of the leading causes of death among children.”

There are many different tips that the public can use as reminders to protect children from heatstroke. When arriving at your destination, always check the back seat of the vehicle before locking it or walking away. It can also be helpful to keep something you will need before exiting your vehicle, such as your handbag, license, cell phone, etc., on the backseat. Additionally, parents can keep a stuffed animal in a child’s car seat when it is empty, and move the toy to the front seat as a reminder when the child is in the back.

“A child should never be left in a car, even if it is only for a few minutes,” said Human Services Director Marc Cherna. “Parents should always take their children with them even to make a quick stop.”

To many, leaving a child in a car seems unfathomable. However, a person of any age or any profession is liable to do so. When a routine is thrown off, something unexpected comes up, or a busy day is planned, it is possible for the unthinkable to happen. Residents are encouraged to practice the above safety tips this summer to prevent leaving a child in an unattended vehicle.

“While there are instances in which children die in cars due to heatstroke, tragedies such as this are preventable,” said Emergency Services Chief Alvin Henderson. “If you see a child left unattended in a car, please call 9-1-1 immediately. Even a few minutes may mean the difference of life and death.”

In the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, it is a summary offense to leave a child under the age of six unattended in a vehicle that is out of the adult’s sight under the Leaving an Unattended Child in a Motor Vehicle law. Anyone who sees a child in a vehicle unattended should call 9-1-1 and remain with the vehicle.

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