



Dodge County Traffic Safety Commission

Scott Smith, Traffic Safety Coordinator Chad Enright, Co-Coordinator

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Date: June 2, 2020

ssmith@co.dodge.wi.us

asauer@co.dodge.wi.us

LOOK BEFORE YOU LOCK:

Dodge County Traffic Safety Commission with Dodge County Public Health warns families about the dangers of vehicle related heatstroke.

Outside of crashes, heatstroke is the number one vehicle-related killer of children in the United States. That's why Dodge County Traffic Safety Commission is teaming up with the Dodge County Public Health Unit and the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, in an attempt to reduce these deaths by reminding parents and caregivers about the dangers of vehicular heatstroke and leaving children in hot cars. In 2019, there were 52 preventable deaths of children in vehicles in the United States, only one child less than in 2018.

In 2019, preliminary figures from the Wisconsin Department of Health Services show five people died in Wisconsin due to heat-related causes. In the last five years, at least 17 people have died in Wisconsin and thousands of residents have fallen ill or been hospitalized due to heat-related conditions.

"As outside temperatures rise, the risk of children dying from vehicular heatstroke increases," said Dodge County Public Health Officer Abby Sauer. "One child dies from heatstroke nearly every 10 days in the United States from being left in a car or crawling into an unlocked vehicle. What is most tragic is that every single one of these deaths could have been prevented."

The Dodge County Traffic Safety Commission urges all parents and caregivers to do these three things:

- NEVER leave a child in a vehicle unattended.
- Make it a habit to look in the back seat EVERY time you exit the car.
- ALWAYS lock the car and put the keys out of reach.

If you are a bystander and see a child in a hot vehicle:

- Make sure the child is okay and responsive. If not, call 911 immediately.
- If the child appears to be okay, attempt to locate the parents or have the facility's security or management page the car owner over the PA system.
- If there is someone with you, one person should actively search for the parent while the other waits at the car.
- If the child is not responsive or appears to be in distress, attempt to get into the car to assist the child—even if that means breaking a window—many states have "Good Samaritan" laws that protect people from lawsuits for getting involved to help a person in an emergency.

Know the warning signs of heatstroke, which include red, hot, and moist or dry skin; no sweating; a strong rapid pulse or a slow weak pulse; nausea; confusion; or acting strangely. If a child exhibits any of these signs after being in a hot vehicle, quickly spray the child with cool water or with a garden hose— NEVER put a child in an ice bath. Call 911 or your local emergency number immediately.

A child's body temperature can rise up to five times faster than an adult's, and heatstroke can occur in outside temperatures as low as 57 degrees. On an 80-degree day, a car can reach deadly levels in just 10 minutes.

"More than half (54%) of all vehicle-related heatstroke deaths in children are caused by a child accidentally being left in the car, and 26% are from a child getting into a hot car unsupervised," said Scott Smith, Dodge County Traffic Safety Coordinator
"We want to get the word out to parents and caregivers: please *Look Before You Lock.*"

###