

# Safety Topic of the Month

## Children and Pets in Cars

*Info taken from lhsfna.org and safecar.gov*

You will only be gone for a few minutes. At least, that's what you tell yourself when you pull up to the store. The kids are strapped in their safety seats. You could leave them in the car, lock the doors, run in and be out before they know it. What's the worst that could happen?

While you might think leaving a child alone in a car for several minutes is harmless, you are putting your child at risk for heat stroke, power window strangulation or, worst of all, death.

Summer is a particularly vulnerable time for kids in cars. According to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, 25 children die every year due to heat stroke caused by being left alone in a parked car. Temperatures inside of a vehicle can swell above 100 degrees in as little as ten minutes on a hot day. A cracked window cannot help because even on days when the temperature is cooler outside, your car can lock in heat that is intolerable to a child.

Pets are just as susceptible. Ten minutes in a hot car can cause your animal to go into heat stress, which is identified by increasing panting, rapid pulse, glazed eyes or vomiting.

Heat is not the only threat. If your car is stolen, the thief has abducted your child and/or pet as well. Also, gears can be shifted and the car can be accidentally set into motion or a power window that has been left down could be accidentally closed, which could cause serious injury to whoever gets caught.

Safeguarding your loved ones from the dangers of being locked in a car starts with prevention. Never leave your child unattended in a car, no matter how short a period of time. Take your children with you when you get out of the car or leave them with a reliable child care provider. The same goes for pets, shop at pet-friendly stores so that your furry friend can come with you. If that is not possible, leave your pets at home where they are safe.

If you see a child in a hot car, safecar.gov says:

- Do not wait on the driver to return for more than a couple of minutes.
- If the child appears to be in distress or not responsive, call 911 immediately.
  - Get the child out of the car.
  - Use cool water on the child by spraying them; do not soak them.
- For children who are responsive, call 911 and stay with them until help arrives.
- If other people are around you, have them search for the driver or have the driver paged.