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The Maine Bureau of Highway Safety Urges Families and Caregivers: *Once You Park, Stop, Look, Lock.*

Augusta, ME — Vehicular heatstroke is the leading cause of non-crash, vehicle-related death for children 14 and younger in the United States. The U.S. Department of Transportation's National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) and the Maine Bureau of Highway Safety urge parents and caregivers to learn about and share critical information about the dangers of leaving children alone in hot cars. Help us spread the word: *Once You Park, Stop, Look, Lock.*

Since 1998, when safety advocates first began tracking, vehicular heatstroke has killed more than 1,000 children. On average, one child dies from heatstroke every 10 days in the United States from being left in a car or crawling into an unlocked vehicle. Tragically, every single one of these deaths could have been prevented.

Hot cars are deadly: Internal vehicle temperatures can rise quickly and become up to 50 degrees warmer than outside air temperatures. Because a child's body temperature increases 3 to 5 times faster than an adult's, even a cool day outside may still pose a threat to a child. Toddlers and young children are also at risk of vehicular heatstroke, and they are more likely to climb into a vehicle without supervision. Children "gaining access" to a vehicle account for nearly one-quarter of hot car deaths. It is a parent or caregiver's responsibility to teach children that the vehicle is not a playground and playing in and around a car is dangerous.

"Parents and caregivers think this sort of tragedy could never happen to them," said Erica Davis, Highway Safety Coordinator for the Bureau. "Sadly, 'never' does happen. Anyone is susceptible to forgetfulness. It doesn't matter who is taking care of the child, what their background is, or where they come from. Routines are often upended and it is during these moments of hurriedness and change in routine that many of these tragedies occur. *Once You Park, Stop, Look, Lock.*"

Buckle Up. Drive Safely.



Office Located At:
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Maine Bureau of Highway Safety urges all parents and caregivers to do these things to help prevent child heatstroke:

- Make it a habit to look in the back seat EVERY time you exit the car. Leave your wallet or purse as a reminder.
- NEVER leave a child in a vehicle unattended.
- ALWAYS lock the car and put the keys out of reach.
- Ask your daycare provider to call you within a few minutes if your child is late for daycare.
- Teach children that if they can't get out of the rear doors, try the front doors; and to honk the horn to get the attention of others.

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 near 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, including Maine, have “Good Samaritan” laws that protect people from lawsuits for getting involved to help a person in an emergency.

For more information on vehicle heatstroke, what to do if you see a child trapped in a vehicle, and warning signs of heatstroke, visit www.nhtsa.gov/campaign/heatstroke. For current data, visit noheatstroke.org.

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