



A Car is Not a Child's Toy: Preventing Heat Injury and Entrapment

Children should never be left alone inside of your car, even for a few minutes. Last year alone, Phoenix firefighters responded to 599 incidents of children locked inside a car.

Many parents mistakenly think they can leave a child in a vehicle while running a “quick” errand. Unfortunately a delay of just a few minutes can lead to tragedy.

Heat is much more dangerous to children than it is to adults. When left in a hot vehicle, a young child’s core body temperature can increase three to five times faster than that of an adult -- causing permanent injury or death.

When the outside temperature is 93 F, even with a window cracked, the temperature inside a car can reach 125 F in just 20 minutes and approximately 140 F in 40 minutes.

Safety in Your Driveway

While parked in a driveway, your car can be especially hazardous. Unlocked cars pose serious risks to children who are naturally curious and often lack fear. Once they crawl in, children don’t have the developmental capability to get out.

The National SAFE KIDS Campaign warns parents to be especially vigilant about their children’s safety on days when temperatures are 80 degrees or higher by offering the following safety precautions to combat heat-related injuries in cars.

- Never leave your child in an unattended car, even with the windows down.
- Teach children not to play in or around cars.
- Always lock car doors and trunks even at home.
- Be wary of child-resistant locks. Teach older children how to disable the driver’s door locks if they unintentionally become entrapped in a motor vehicle.
- Check to make sure all children leave the vehicle when you reach your destination.
- Don’t overlook sleeping infants.
- Watch children closely around cars, particularly when loading and unloading.
- Make sure you check the temperature of the car seat surface and safety belt buckles before restraining your children in the car.
- Use a light covering to shade the seat of your parked car. Consider using windshield shades in front and back windows.

Trunks are for Elephants not for Kids

Children may think the trunk is a fun hiding place, but if they become trapped, they could suffer a devastating heat stroke leading to permanent injury or death.

- Keep car keys out of children's reach and sight.
- Keep the trunk of your car locked at all times, especially when parked in the driveway or near the home.
- Keep the rear fold-down seats closed to help prevent kids from getting into the trunk from inside the car.
- Contact your automobile dealership about getting your vehicle retrofitted with a trunk release mechanism.
- If your child gets locked inside a car, get him out and dial 9-1-1 or your local emergency number immediately.