

NEWS RELEASE

Public Health - Madison & Dane County

(PHMDC)

For Immediate Release

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Leaving Kids or Pets in Hot Cars is a Very Dangerous Practice

Car Temperatures can Quickly Spike to Deadly Levels

Madison WI – June 24, 2015 – If you find yourself doing some errands with a child or a pet in the car with you, and have a quick stop to make, you might think that since it will only be a moment, it would be OK to leave the child or pet in the car. You might even crack a window open to make sure that they get some air. Doing this would be a spectacularly bad idea, especially since summer temperatures are now upon us. The hard facts are that if your two minute errand turned into ten minutes, here's what could happen.

If it is a balmy 70° outside, the inside of your car would reach 90° in those ten minutes. If it is 80°, and if it is a 90° day, the inside of the care would reach 109°. The car temperatures get even higher as the timeline gets longer. At a few degrees higher than 90°, the car would reach about 140° in 40 minutes. The bottom line is that these temperatures can have fatal consequences. Every summer we see headlines reporting such tragic outcomes starting with heat stress and heatstroke and leading to death.

Leaving the engine on with the air conditioning running may seem like a good solution, but if the engine stalls, the same sequence of dangerous conditions can quickly unfold.

It is important to know the signs of heat stress and heatstroke and this knowledge can also provide a sharp reminder to never do this. The symptoms of heatstroke in children and adults are hot, dry skin (no sweating), chills, throbbing headache and high body temperature. Symptoms for heat stress include heavy panting, glazed eyes, rapid pulse, dizziness, vomiting and a deep red or purple tongue. For animals, they include body temperatures of 104°-110° F, excessive panting, dark or bright red tongue and gums, sticky or dry tongue and gums, staggering, stupor, seizures, bloody diarrhea or vomiting, coma and death

Heatstroke is a serious medical emergency for both children and adults, so call 911 right away. Pets with these symptoms should be taken to a vet (or emergency animal clinic) as soon as possible.

The best protection from this risk is to NEVER LEAVE A CHILD OR A PET ALONE IN A VEHICLE. While there are legal penalties for doing this, they are nowhere as great or as devastating as the emotional costs for the harm done to a child or an animal left in a hot car. On hot or warm days, just leave your pet at home, and always take your child with you - no matter how short you think your errand will be.

If you see a parked car with a child left alone, step up and call 911 and stay with the car until help arrives. If you see a pet left alone, also call 911. According to Animal Services, almost all cases of animals left alone in cars are in the parking lots of malls or large retail stores.

For more information on the impact of heat on people, check the following links:
http://www.cdc.gov/niosh/topics/heatstress/#_Heat_Stroke

For more detailed safety information about kids and hot cars, see

<http://www.publichealthmdc.com/family/safetyAndInjuryPrevention/document...>

For more information on heatstroke in animals, check the following link:

http://vetmedicine.about.com/od/summerheathhazards/f/FAQ_heatstroke.htm

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An online version of this release is available at

<http://www.cityofmadison.com/news/leaving-kids-or-pets-in-hot-cars-is-a-very-dangerous-practice>