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A COALITION OF STATE, CITY AND VOLUNTARY AGENCIES REMIND PARENTS AND CAREGIVERS TO “LOOK BEFORE YOU LOCK”

The New York State Office of Children and Family Services, NYS Department of Health, NYS State Police, New York City Administration for Children’s Services and Prevent Child Abuse New York are Teaming Up to Prevent Child Deaths in Hot Cars this Summer

NEW YORK, NY – A group of state, city and voluntary agencies reminds anyone who transports an infant or small child in their vehicle to “Look Before You Lock.” The phrase reminds drivers to check the back seat every time to prevent them from leaving a child in a hot car and thus avoid a potentially tragic situation.

On average, 39 children under the age of 15 die each year from heatstroke after being left in a vehicle, according to a study from San Jose State University. That can happen either when someone goes into a store “for a quick stop” or they forget the child is in the car. Almost a quarter of the children who have died in hot cars were in an employer parking lot with the parent or caregiver at work.

The New York State Office of Children and Family Services is joining forces with other child- and family-serving agencies on a social media campaign to remind all drivers to check the back seat every time they leave the car to make sure they have not left children unattended in the car. Along with OCFS, the New York State Department of Health, the New York State Police, the New York City Administration for Children’s Services and Prevent Child Abuse NY are spreading the word.

“ACS is committed to keeping children across New York City safe and that’s why, in order to prevent future tragedies, we’re reminding all parents to look before you lock when exiting a vehicle,” said **ACS Commissioner David A. Hansell**. “Children should never be left in a car unattended, not even for a moment. Especially as the weather gets warmer, New Yorkers should be mindful of the dangers involving leaving a child in a hot car.”

“We know that a disrupted routine is a primary risk factor for accidentally leaving a child in a car,” said **Office of Children and Family Services Commissioner Sheila J. Poole**. “This year, practically everyone’s routine has been disrupted, making it more important than ever to check the back seat. Put something there that you need: keys, your purse or briefcase, your cell phone, to help you remember to look before you lock. Doing so could save a child’s life.”

“Coping with the challenges of remaining vigilant during the COVID-19 pandemic makes it easy for people to become distracted and unintentionally leave children or pets in a hot car,” said **New York State Department of Health Commissioner Dr. Howard Zucker**. “Extreme heat can lead to heatstroke and other serious health challenges. If you have children or pets

travelling with you, always take the time to check your car to make sure no one has been left behind and keep keys and remote-access devices out of a child's reach to prevent them from being trapped inside."

"Keeping our children safe is among our highest priorities," said **New York State Police Superintendent Keith M. Corlett**. "We are proud to partner with other state agencies to do our part to ensure the safety of our young people. I urge all motorists to use caution and remember to 'look before you lock.' By working together, and raising awareness, we can save lives."

Just two years ago, 52 children between the ages of seven weeks and five years died after being left in cars. That was the highest number in two decades, according to a study from San Jose State University/NoHeatStroke.org. In the month of July alone, 189 children died of heatstroke, more than any other month, the report found.

An example: if the outside temperature is 80°, the inside of a car can reach 109° in just 20 minutes; it can reach 118° in 40 minutes; in can reach 123° in an hour. Anyone who sees a child left alone in a car should call 911 immediately.

"First we need to raise awareness, so people know how to respond," said **Tim Hathaway, Executive Director of Prevent Child Abuse NY**. "It's parents, anyone who takes care of kids, the general public – all of us together can be on the alert for this critical safety issue!"

The coalition asks the public's help in spreading the word by sharing our social media "Look Before You Lock" campaign postings for everyone's safety.



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