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Heat Stroke Prevention Day highlights need for vigilance: don't leave kids in cars

LANSING, Mich. – As part of Heat Stroke Prevention Day, The Michigan Department of Health and Human Services is reminding parents and caregivers to never leave children alone in vehicles. Nationwide, more than 138 children died from heatstroke between 2013 and 2016, and all of these deaths are preventable.

"Death from heatstroke can happen anytime, even when the temperature is mild," said Nick Lyon, director of MDHHS. "That's why it's so important to remain vigilant and never leave a child alone in a car, not even for short periods of time."

It doesn't have to be the middle of the summer for a child to get overheated. The temperatures inside a car can increase 20 degrees in as little as ten minutes, and because a child's body heats up three to five times faster than adult's, they are more susceptible to heatstroke. Temperatures inside a car can double the temperature outside.

Together, we can prevent deaths and near misses by remembering to **ACT**.

- **A:** Avoid heatstroke-related injury and death by never leaving your child alone in a car, not even for a minute. And make sure to keep your car locked when you're not in it so kids don't get in on their own.
- **C:** Create reminders by putting something in the back of your car next to your child such as a briefcase, a purse or a cell phone that is needed at your final destination. This is especially important if you're not following your normal routine.
- **T:** Take action. If you see or hear a child alone in a car, call 911. Emergency personnel want you to call. They are trained to respond to these situations. One call could save a life.

Several agencies have come together to keep this message in front of people throughout the warm weather season. Michigan State Police are reinforcing this message through the outreach efforts of their Community Service Troopers. Secretary of State Ruth Johnson has joined the effort to remind families and caregivers of this very preventable danger. "Injury or death due to heat stroke is especially tragic because it is so easily prevented," Johnson said. "For a safe and happy summer, please make sure your children, and pets, too, are never left alone in a vehicle."

Safe Kids Coalitions across the state are working hard in their communities to increase awareness. For more information and safety tips on preventing child heatstroke deaths, please visit www.safekids.org/heatstroke.

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