



CHILDREN HEAT EMERGENCIES AND CARS

Dallas Fire-Rescue Personnel and Local Public Safety experts caution childcare givers about the potentially deadly dangers of leaving youngsters unattended in a car. Health and safety experts warn children locked inside cars can die of heat stroke, as happens in some 25 cases each year.

Dr. Elaine Pomeranz, medical director for the Child Protection Team at the University of Michigan Health System, says heat exhaustion and heat stroke can strike quickly in enclosed vehicles. In addition, the same can be said of hypothermia in cold weather, she added.

A recent General Motors and SAFE KIDS Coalition study found children are more vulnerable to heat because a child's body temperature increases three to five times faster than that of an adult.

When it is 93 degrees Fahrenheit outside, the temperature inside a car can exceed 125 degrees in about 20 minutes. Infants who are ill or have other predisposed health conditions are especially vulnerable, but even healthy infants are at high risk when left in a hot car, doctors' say.

The child's skin becomes red and dry, and he is unable to produce sweat to reduce the core body temperature. The heart rate quickens, and the child becomes confused and loses consciousness. Then, the system shuts down.

"Cracking" the windows is not an answer, Dr. Pomeranz advises caregivers to seek emergency medical attention if a child has been exposed to high temperatures in an enclosed vehicle.