

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:**  
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**Contact: Corri Miller-Hobbs**  
**(804) 628-2077**

## **SAFE KIDS OF VIRGINIA REMINDS PARENTS OF CONSEQUENCES OF LEAVING KIDS IN HOT, PARKED VEHICLES**

### *New Research Shows Humidity Increases the Danger*

**Richmond, Virginia**The **SAFE KIDS of Virginia** warns parents that leaving a child unattended in a vehicle is never appropriate and can lead to deadly consequences. Since 1996, at least 175 children have died of heat stroke after being trapped inside a parked car. Most of the children were strapped in child safety seats and left behind or forgotten by an adult, while other gained access to an unlocked car and could not escape.

"No parent deliberately exposes their child to what becomes an oven-like temperature. The price they pay for this ignorance and absentmindedness is unimaginable," said Corri Miller-Hobbs of the SAFE KIDS of Virginia coalition. "Our job is to convince parents that kids, cars and heat are a deadly combination."

A new study commissioned by General Motors reveals that in humid heat, serious injury or death to a child in a closed vehicle can occur in half of the time that it takes in dry heat conditions. However, in both situations, extreme heat can prove dangerous in only a matter of minutes.

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 even death. Recent research shows that on a 95-degree day the temperature within a small vehicle can exceed 122 degrees within 20 minutes and 150 degrees within 40 minutes. It also shows that even when outdoor temperatures are as low as 60 degrees, a vehicle can heat to dangerous levels.

For the third year in a row, SAFE KIDS and General Motors will conduct a national public awareness campaign aimed at educating parents and caregivers about the dangers of leaving children unattended in motor vehicles. The *Never Leave Your Child Alone* initiative includes brochures in English and Spanish that deliver potentially lifesaving information. SAFE KIDS of Virginia coalition is just one of the more than 300 SAFE KIDS coalitions across the country that will distribute the brochures at local community events including the Virginia Commonwealth University Health System Pediatric Safety Fair. This event will be held June 18, 2003 at Maymont Park, the Hampton Street entrance. The event will be 10 a.m. until 2 p.m.

The SAFE KIDS of Virginia coalition encourages parents to be particularly vigilant about their children's safety, by offering the following safety precautions to combat heat-related injuries in cars:

- Never leave your child unattended in a motor vehicle, even with a window open.
- Teach children not to play in, on or around cars.
- Always lock car doors and trunks and keep keys out children's reach.
- Watch children closely around cars, particularly when loading or unloading items.
- Ensure that all children exit the vehicle at your destination.
- Don't overlook sleeping infants.

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- Check the temperature of child safety seats and seat belt buckles before restraining your child.
- Use a light covering to shade the seat of your parked car. Consider using windshield shades in front and back windows.

Car trunks can be especially hazardous. In very hot weather, heat stroke may result and could lead to permanent disability or even death in a matter of minutes. Keep these safety precautions in mind:

- 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.
- Put car keys out of children's reach and sight.
- 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.
- Contact your automobile dealership about getting your vehicle retrofitted with a trunk release mechanism.

*The SAFE KIDS of Virginia coalition is part of the National SAFE KIDS Campaign, the first and only national organization dedicated solely to the prevention of unintentional childhood injury — the number one killer of children ages 14 and under. More than 300 state and local SAFE KIDS coalitions in all 50 states, the District of Columbia and Puerto Rico comprise the Campaign.*

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