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## **Purple Ribbon campaign warns that kids, hot cars are a dangerous mix**

There is never a good time to leave a child in a vehicle unattended. But, when it comes to the hot summer months, doing so can have deadly consequences.

That is the message health officials want to spread throughout Riverside County during the month of August as part of its Purple Ribbon campaign.

“The purple ribbons serve as an important reminder that small children should never be left unattended in a vehicle for any reason -- not for a minute, not for a second,” said Riverside County Public Health Officer Dr. Cameron Kaiser.

Rising temperatures can quickly turn a vehicle into a death trap for a child who is too young or is unable to escape the sweltering heat.

According to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, heatstroke is the leading cause of non-crash vehicle fatalities for children 14 and under. In 2014, there were at least 30 heatstroke deaths of children in vehicles.

Dr. Kaiser urges parents to avert needless tragedy by never leaving a child in a vehicle unattended, always checking the front and back seats before exiting and locking the car and safely storing the keys so that a child cannot access the vehicle in your absence.

Additionally, if you ever see a child left alone in a vehicle, call 9-1-1 immediately.

Prompted by the death of Kaitlyn Russell, a 6-month-old Corona girl who died in August of 2000 after being left in a hot van, California passed a law making it illegal to leave a child 6 years or younger unattended inside a motor vehicle without the supervision of someone at least 12 years old in 2001.

The Purple Ribbon campaign is held each year in August as part of an effort to remind residents of this important safety message.

As part of the campaign, Injury Prevention Services will distribute purple ribbons to agencies throughout the month as a way of spreading the word to prevent hot car deaths.

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**Photo caption:** Injury Prevention Services Director Julisa Alvizo-Silva (left) and Nicole DeFries, Police Service Representative with Riverside Police Department mark Purple Ribbon month by tying ribbons on trees and posts at the Riverside County Health Administration Building in August 2014. (Photo courtesy of Riverside County Department of Public Health)