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Purple Ribbon Campaign warns about the dangers of leaving children alone in vehicles

During the hot summer months, some drivers try and make the mad dash into the store or market as their child sleeps inside the vehicle. They may think it will only be a few minutes – tops – and they can make it back to the vehicle and be on their way.

But Riverside County health officials, along with Riverside police and the California Highway Patrol, Prevent Child Abuse Riverside County have a blunt warning.

Never leave a child alone in a parked vehicle. Never.

“Not only is it against the law to leave a child in a vehicle unattended, more importantly, it’s a potentially deadly mistake,” said CHP Officer Steve Carapia.

State and local officials have joined together to promote August as Purple Ribbon Month and bring attention to the dangers of leaving babies and small children in parked vehicles. Each year emergency crews respond to incidents in which infants need medical attention after being left in vehicles. Sometimes it is too late – two children have died in California since June after being left in hot vehicles.

To help reduce the number of deaths from heatstroke, you must remember to **ACT**.

A: Avoid heatstroke-related injury and death - Never leave your child alone in a car. Make sure to keep your vehicle locked while not in it. This will prevent children from entering the vehicles alone.

C: Create reminders - Make sure to place an item you will need when arriving at your final destination in the back, next to your child.

T: Take action - If you see a child alone in a car, call 911. Emergency personnel want you to call.

In January 2001, 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. This law was spearheaded by the family of Kaitlyn Russell, a 6-month-old girl from Corona who died in August of 2000 after being left in a hot van.

During the month, hundreds of purple ribbons will be distributed in honor of Kaitlyn and to remind people of the dangers of leaving children in vehicles.