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Media Release

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Emergency Management Officials Urge Caution When Temperatures Rise

Parents Reminded to “Look Before You Lock” to Prevent Child Deaths

Each year in the United States, an average of 37 children die from heatstroke after being left in locked cars. So far in 2017, 14 child fatalities have occurred. With the hottest days of summer just around the corner, the Illinois Emergency Management Agency (IEMA) and county and municipal emergency management agencies are urging parents to take steps to ensure their children aren't locked in a hot car.

Emergency management officials will be offering heat safety tips throughout July as part of Heat Safety Awareness Month in Illinois.

“No one should ever be left in a parked car, even for a short time,” said IEMA Director James Joseph. “Temperatures inside a parked vehicle can rapidly rise to dangerous levels even if the windows are open slightly, and can lead to brain damage or death.”

Joseph said heat effects can be more severe on children because their bodies warm at a faster rate than adults. He encourages parents to develop habits that will ensure the backseat is always checked before the car is locked, such as putting a purse, cell phone, or other needed item in the back seat or making it a routine to open the car's back door every time the car is parked.

“We experience hot and humid conditions several times during the summer in Illinois. The combination of this heat and humidity can reach dangerous levels, particularly for those spending time outdoors in direct sunlight and in buildings without air conditioning,” said Chris Miller, warning coordination meteorologist with the National Weather Service in Lincoln. “Illnesses and fatalities due to heat are preventable. **Never leave children or pets unattended in a vehicle; look before you lock your automobile.**”

Other hot weather tips include the following:

- Always lock car doors and trunks, even at home, and keep keys out of children's reach.
- Stay hydrated by drinking at least 1½ to 2 quarts of fluids daily, even if you don't feel thirsty.
- Avoid alcoholic beverages and drinks containing caffeine.
- Avoid overexertion and strenuous outdoor activities if possible.
- Take advantage of cooling centers, public pools and air-conditioned stores and malls during periods of extreme heat. Even a few hours a day in air conditioning can help prevent heat-related illnesses.
- Check on family, friends, and neighbors who do not have air conditioning and who spend much of their time alone.
- Don't forget your pets. Offer pets extra water and place the water bowl in a shaded area if outdoors. Make sure pets have a shady refuge where they can escape direct sun exposure.
- If you or someone around you begins experiencing dizziness, nausea, headache, confusion, and a rapid pulse, seek medical attention immediately, as these could be the symptoms of heatstroke.

Additional tips on how to protect yourself and others from heat-related illnesses are available on the State's Ready Illinois website (www.Ready.Illinois.gov).

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