

Vehicular Heatstroke Prevention Stakeholder Toolkit

Dear Partners,

Spreading the word about the dangers of vehicular heatstroke and how to prevent it is vital to keeping everyone safe. In Colorado, seven children have died from vehicular heatstroke in the past 25 years, but there have been no deaths in the last decade. CDOT wants to keep this number at zero.

This partner toolkit contains the latest campaign materials, including downloadable graphics and prewritten content for websites, newsletters and social media. We encourage you to share this information with your networks and on your platforms to help ensure a safe summer for everyone.

Thank you for your commitment to safety!



Newsletter Article

How to prevent vehicular heatstroke & what to do if you see an unattended passenger in a hot car

Over the last 25 years in Colorado, seven children have tragically died from vehicular heatstroke, but there have been no reported deaths in the past decade. CDOT urges parents and caregivers to keep this number at zero, especially as we enter the hottest months.

Vehicular heatstroke can happen even in mild temperatures as low as 57 degrees, affecting children, older individuals and people with disabilities who may be unable to exit a hot car. About 80% of the total temperature increase inside a vehicle occurs in the first 30 minutes, when maximum temperatures can exceed 150 degrees, according to [NoHeatStroke.org](https://www.noheatstroke.org/). A child's body temperature rises three to five times faster than an adult's, and older adults are also more sensitive to heat. Additionally, people with disabilities are at a higher risk of heatstroke if they are left unattended in a hot car,

as they may not be able to exit on their own or communicate their needs to a caregiver.



Children knowingly left in cars by their caregivers account for 21% of vehicular heatstroke fatalities. Time is not your friend this summer — short errands can quickly turn into long lines or unforeseen delays. Parking in the shade or cracking a window will not keep a passenger safe.

More than half of pediatric vehicular heatstroke deaths occur when a child is unknowingly left in a vehicle. CDOT recommends leaving a passenger's belongings, such as a toy or stuffed animal, in the front seat or entering your passenger's destination into your GPS as an additional reminder.

Everyone must take precautions to keep the state's hot-car deaths at zero, not just parents and caregivers. According to [NHTSA](#), more than 25% of pediatric vehicular heatstroke deaths occur when a child gains access to an unlocked car and gets trapped. It is vital for anyone with a vehicle to lock their car doors so children and other vulnerable individuals cannot gain access to an unsupervised vehicle. Even if you don't have a child of your own, a child in your neighborhood could get into your unlocked vehicle. If a child is missing, quickly check all vehicles, including their trunks.

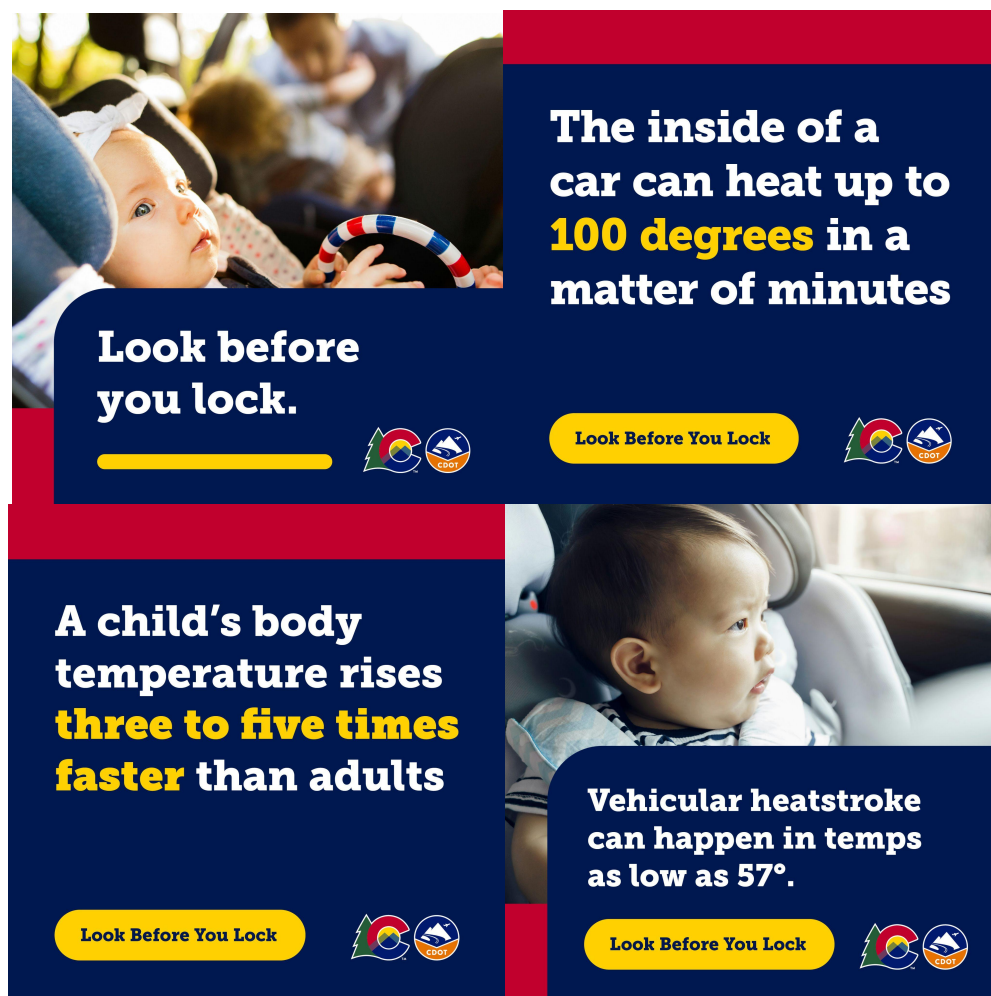
If you notice an unattended passenger in a hot car, act immediately and call 911. In 2017, Colorado passed [HB17-1179](#), which provides civil and criminal immunity to a person who forcibly enters a locked vehicle to provide aid to an at-risk person or animal.

Leaving an animal in a parked vehicle in conditions that endanger its health or well-being (due to extreme heat, cold or lack of ventilation) is classified as animal cruelty under Colorado law. Violators face severe penalties, including fines of up to \$999, jail time and mandatory court appearances.

In Colorado, leaving a child in a hot car is considered child abuse. Leaving an at-risk individual, such as an elderly person or a person with disabilities, in a hot car is considered neglect and is a Class 1 misdemeanor. If neglect leads to death or serious bodily injury, it is classified as a crime of violence, which is a felony and may result in prison time.

Social Media Posts

You are welcome to share the following social media posts on your own platforms to help spread the word. CDOT will use the hashtag #LookBeforeYouLock to spread awareness throughout the summer. You can [download graphics to accompany these posts here](#).



Post #1

Most hot-car deaths (53%) happen because someone forgets a child in a car. It can happen to anyone, especially when you go into autopilot. Always check the back seat before locking your car, and follow these tips:

- Keep a stuffed animal or toy in the front seat as a visual reminder when your child is in the back seat.
- Put your phone, purse or work bag in the back seat next to your child.

#LookBeforeYouLock #PreventHeatstroke

Post #2

Heatstroke fatalities can happen in vehicles parked in shaded areas and in temperatures as low as 57 degrees, even with the windows cracked. If you see a child unattended in a hot car, immediately call 911 and get help. #LookBeforeYouLock #PreventHeatstroke

Post #3

Hot-car deaths don't just happen when a child is forgotten – 25% of such deaths occur when kids get into parked vehicles. Follow these tips to help keep your kids and others safe:

- Get in the habit of locking your car year-round.
- Teach kids that a car is not a play area.
- Keep car keys out of a child's reach.
- If a child is missing, quickly check all vehicles, including the trunk.

#LookBeforeYouLock #PreventHeatstroke

Post #4

A car can heat up by 20 degrees in as little as 10 minutes. Rolling down a window does little to keep a vehicle cool, and heatstroke deaths have occurred even in vehicles parked in shaded areas. Never leave a child, elderly or disabled passenger in the car even for a quick errand. #LookBeforeYouLock #heatstrokekills #PreventHeatstroke

Post #5

What should you do if you see a child or other vulnerable passenger alone in a parked car? Call 911 and get help immediately. A vehicle can reach dangerous temperatures in as little as 10 minutes – even with the windows cracked, even parked in the shade, even when it's only 70 degrees outside. #LookBeforeYouLock #HeatstrokeKills #PreventHeatstroke

More Resources

- NoHeatStroke.org
- NHTSA - Heatstroke Prevention
- HB17-1179 Immunity for Emergency Rescue From Locked Vehicle
- CDOT social media platforms
 - [CDOT Facebook](#)
 - [CDOT X](#) (formerly Twitter)
- Campaign contact:
 - Tamara Rollison, CDOT Communications Manager, tamara.rollison@state.co.us