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**Illinois Department of Children and Family Services and City of Harrisburg  
Fire Department remind parents to keep children safe in and around cars  
during two of the hottest months of the year**

***Harrisburg Fire Dept. to demonstrate an emergency rescue from a hot car***

HARRISBURG, Ill.—The Harrisburg Fire Department and the Illinois Department of Children and Family Services, in partnership with KidsandCars.org and the Harrisburg Police and Saline County Sheriff’s departments team up to demonstrate a rescue from a hot car and offer tips to parents and caregivers on how to keep children safe in and around cars during the hottest months, July and August.

The rescue demonstration will take place at 1 p.m. on Thursday, July 28 at the Harrisburg Fire Department, 100 S. Main Street.

Every year in the United States, approximately 37 children die from heatstroke inside vehicles. About one-third of these tragedies occur when a child enters a car on their own and is unable to get out.

So far this year, 19 children have died in hot cars in the United States. Recently in Illinois, a four-year-old child was hospitalized after being discovered inside a hot car in McHenry County.

“A child's body temperature rises three to five times faster than an adult's, so the risk of heat stroke, brain damage and even death is much greater for a child left in a hot car,” says Illinois DCFS Director George Sheldon. “Never leave your child alone in a car, even for a minute or two. And make sure empty cars are locked at all times, so young children cannot get in by themselves and get locked in.”

Illinois ranks 10<sup>th</sup> in the nation in heatstroke deaths of children, with 20 fatalities between 1990 and 2014.

“The temperature rises so rapidly in cars, we ask the public to be aware of their surroundings and if you see a child alone in a car, with the windows rolled up, get involved, call 911 immediately,” says City of Harrisburg Fire Chief John Gunning. “In a big city first responders can arrive quickly but in rural areas it can take longer for us to show-up so preventing this scenario is the key to saving lives.”

**Follow these Safety Tips from [KidsAndCars.org](http://KidsAndCars.org):**

- NEVER leave a child alone in or around vehicles. Not even for a minute!
- Keep vehicles locked at all times, even in driveways or garages. Ask home visitors, child care providers and neighbors to do the same.

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- Keep car keys and remote openers out of reach of children.
- Never leave children alone in or around cars; not even for a minute.
- If a child goes missing, immediately check the inside passenger compartments and trunks of all vehicles in the area very carefully, even if they are locked. A child may lock the car doors after entering a vehicle on their own, but may not be able to unlock them.
- If you see a child alone in a vehicle, get involved. Call 911 immediately. If the child seems hot or sick, get them out of the vehicle as quickly as possible.
- Be especially careful during busy times, schedule changes and periods of crisis or holidays. This is when many tragedies occur.
- **“Look Before You Lock”** - Get in the habit of always opening the back door to check the back seat before leaving your vehicle. Make sure no child has been left behind.
- Create a reminder to check the back seat.
  - Put something you'll need like your cell phone, handbag, employee ID or brief case, etc., in the back seat so that you have to open the back door to retrieve that item every time you park.
  - Keep a large stuffed animal in the child's car seat. When the child is placed in the car seat, place the stuffed animal in the front passenger seat. It's a visual reminder that the child is in the back seat.
- Make sure you have a strict policy in place with your childcare provider to call you if your child does not show up as planned.

"Harrisburg's fire department works very hard to insure the safety of our citizens young and old. Our educational demonstration will show the effects of leaving a child in a hot car," says Beth Montfort, Harrisburg Safety Commissioner. "We are fortunate to have DCFS providing educational seminars to our community. As safety Commissioner I urge everyone to attend to see the great things we can do by working together."

Visit [kidsandcars.org](http://kidsandcars.org) for fact sheets, safety tips, graphics, images, infographics and more to help raise awareness in your community.

**DCFS** receives, investigates and acts upon a report of child abuse or neglect every five minutes. Tens of thousands of children are safer thanks to those who call our Child Abuse hotline, 1-800-25-ABUSE (252-2873) each year. Working together, we can ensure a safe, loving home and brighter future for every child.

*Special thanks to the Harrisburg Fire and Police departments, the Saline County Sherriff and to Opie's Tow Service for providing the demonstration car.*

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