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CHP warns motorists not to leave kids alone in cars Change Story Text Size: [-] [+] [Default]

Source: California Highway Patrol

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Sacramento -- The California Highway Patrol (CHP) reminds motorists the summer heat can quickly create deadly conditions inside a vehicle, especially for children.

"As a driver, you are responsible for the safety of your passengers both while the vehicle is running and when it is parked," said CHP Commissioner Joe Farrow. "Carelessness can lead to tragedy."

Research by the National Highway Transportation Safety Administration (NHTSA) in 2007 showed that for children hyperthermia (heat-stroke) is the leading cause of non-crash vehicle deaths. Every year in the United States, an average of 27 children die as a result of hyperthermia or excessive heat while in a vehicle.

"If you see a child unattended in a vehicle call 911 immediately," Commissioner Farrow said. "Not only is leaving a child in a vehicle unattended dangerous, under California law it is illegal."

On Jan. 1, 2002, the Unattended Child in Motor Vehicle Safety Act took effect. The law became known as "Kaitlyn's Law" in memory of 6-month-old Kaitlyn Russell, of Corona, who died Aug. 15, 2000, after being left alone in her babysitter's car for about two hours.

Kaitlyn's Law makes it an infraction, punishable by a fine of \$100, for any parent, legal guardian, or other person responsible for a child 6 years of age or younger, to leave that child unattended in a vehicle without the supervision of someone at least 12 years of age or older.

The national non-profit organization 4 R Kids Sake has designated August as "Purple Ribbon Month," to raise awareness and educate the public about the dangers of leaving a child unattended in or around a motor vehicle. In recognition of Purple Ribbon Month, the CHP will attach a purple ribbon to the antenna of its patrol cars.

"Hopefully by focusing attention on this issue, we can prevent the senseless loss of innocent lives in the future," Farrow said.

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