



Key Talking Points: Pediatric Vehicular Heatstroke (PVH)

Purpose: Core talking points for news interviews and community presentations regarding vehicular heatstroke prevention in children.

1. The Core Issue

- **What is it?** Pediatric vehicular heatstroke (PVH) occurs when a child's body overheats inside a vehicle and is unable to cool down, which can lead to permanent brain damage, organ failure, or death.
- **Why does it happen?** It generally falls into three scenarios:
 - **Forgotten (53%):** A loving, responsible caregiver completely forgets their child is in the car, often triggered by a sudden change in their normal morning or drop-off routine.¹
 - **Gained Access (24%):** A child climbs into a parked vehicle on their own and becomes trapped inside without the caregiver's knowledge.¹
 - **Knowingly Left (22%):** A caregiver intentionally leaves the child in the vehicle.¹

2. The Science

- **The Greenhouse Effect:** The inside of a vehicle heats up by roughly **19 degrees** Fahrenheit in just **10 minutes**. Cracking the windows makes almost no change in the temperature. Eighty percent of the temperature rise occurs in the first 30 minutes.¹
- **Physiological Vulnerability:** A child's body temperature rises **three to five times faster** than an adult's.²

3. Current Statistics (2026 Data)

- **Nationally:** **13 children** have died from vehicular heatstroke in the United States this year.¹
- **Texas:** While Texas has thankfully recorded **0 fatalities** so far this year, our state historically has the highest total number of pediatric vehicular heatstroke deaths in the nation since 1998 (155 total fatalities).¹ Several "close calls" have been reported in Texas this year in which a bystander called 911 to rescue a child alone in a vehicle.
- *Note: Data is current as of July 23, 2026. Always verify the latest data at noheatstroke.org.*

4. Prevention: The "ACT" Message

- **A – Avoid Heatstroke:** Never leave a child alone in a car, not even for a minute or a quick trip into a store. Always keep your vehicle doors and trunks locked when parked, even in your driveway or garage, so children cannot climb inside. If a child goes missing, check pools and open water sources first, then immediately check all vehicles and trunks.
- **C – Create Reminders:** Keep a stuffed animal or other memento in the child's car seat when it is empty; move it to the front seat as a visual reminder when the child is in the back. Alternatively, place essential daily items like your phone, employee badge, purse, or briefcase on the back seat when traveling.
- **T – Take Action:** If you see a child alone in a vehicle, take immediate action and call 911.

Español

- **Evita las lesiones y muertes relacionadas con la insolación** al no dejar nunca solo(a) a su niño(a) en el vehículo(s), ni siquiera por un minuto. Cierra las puertas y cajuelas de tu(s) vehículo(s) con llave—incluyendo los que están en la entrada y/o la cochera. Si un(a) niño(a) está desaparecido(a), primero revisa la alberca y las fuentes de agua, luego revisa los vehículos, incluyendo las cajuelas.
- **Crea recordatorios.** Mantén un peluche u otro recuerdo en el asiento de seguridad de tu niño(a) cuando esté vacío, y colócalo en el asiento de enfrente para recordarte que tu niño(a) está en el asiento trasero. O coloca y sujeta tu teléfono celular, maletín o cartera, en el asiento trasero cuando tu niño(a) está viajando contigo.
- **Actúa.** Si usted ve a un niño(a) solo en un vehículo, actúa. Llama al 911.

5. Organization Information

- **Texas Heatstroke Task Force (THTF):** A statewide network of child passenger safety advocates, first responders, medical professionals, and parents dedicated to life-saving prevention education. Learn more and download resources at safety-connection.org/heatstroke/texas.

Statewide Media Contact:

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Data Sources & References:

¹ **NoHeatstroke.org:** Jan Null, Department of Earth & Climate Sciences, San Jose State University. (Data current as of July 7, 2026).

² **National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA):** Vehicular Heatstroke Prevention.