**2023 HEATSTROKE PREVENTION CAMPAIGN**

**SAMPLE PRESS RELEASE**

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: [Date]**

**CONTACT: [Name, Phone Number, Email Address]**

**Note: Before filling in the names of the organization and organization spokesperson, you MUST contact them for permission to use their names in this press release. Also, you must get their approval for the language of their quotations, and any changes or additions they may require. Only after this is done should you issue the press release.**

**NHTSA and [Local Organization] Urge   
Families and Caregivers: *Look Before You Lock***

**[City, State]** — For a quarter of a century, safety advocates have tracked child deaths caused by pediatric vehicular heatstroke. Since April 1998, heatstroke has killed more than 940 children. Each death was preventable. The U.S. Department of Transportation’s National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) is working with **[Local Organization]** to urge parents and caregivers to learn about and share critical information about the dangers of leaving children alone in hot cars. Share this lifesaving message with everyone you know: *Look Before You Lock*. For the most recent data on vehicular heatstroke, visit noheatstroke.org.

Vehicle heatstroke is one of the leading causes of traffic-related death for children in the United States. Since 1998, the majority (52.6%) of these tragedies occur when a child is “forgotten” by a parent or caregiver and left in a hot car, and more than half (58%) occur at a home. A busy parent or caregiver may unintentionally forget that a quiet or sleeping child, who may also be facing the back of the car, is in the back of the vehicle. Nearly one-third of these accidents occur with children under one year of age.

By the end of 2022 alone, 33 children had died due to vehicular heatstroke. The death rate has been lower in recent years, which is likely due to more families being at home and routines drastically changed. Still, an average of 38 children died each year as a result of heatstroke.

“We have to teach our children that the vehicle is not a playground, and that playing in and around the car is dangerous,” said **[local official]**. “On average, one child dies from heatstroke nearly every 10 days in the United States from being left in a car or crawling into an unlocked vehicle. What is most tragic is that every single one of these deaths could have been prevented.”

“Gained access” circumstances account for about one-quarter of child heatstroke fatalities. Toddlers and young children are also at risk of vehicular heatstroke, and they are more likely to gain access into a vehicle. Some children gain access into a vehicle without the knowledge of an adult and may be unable to exit the car, especially if child locks are activated.

The bottom line is this: Mothers, fathers, caregivers — anyone is susceptible to forgetfulness. We live in a fast-paced society, and our routines are often upended at a moment’s notice. It is during these moments of hurriedness and change in routine that many of these preventable tragedies occur. For this reason, it is more important than ever to *Look Before You Lock*.

**[Local Organization]** urges all parents and caregivers to do these three things to help prevent child heatstroke:

* Make it a habit to look in the back seat EVERY time you exit the car.
* NEVER leave a child in a vehicle unattended.
* ALWAYS lock the car and put the keys out of reach.

If you are a bystander and see a child in a hot vehicle:

* Make sure the child is okay and responsive. If not, call 911 immediately.
* If the child appears to be okay, attempt to locate the parents or have the facility’s security or management page the car owner over the PA system.
* If there is someone with you, one person should actively search for the parent while the other waits at the car.
* If the child is not responsive or appears to be in distress, attempt to get into the car to assist the child — even if that means breaking a window. Many states have “Good Samaritan” laws that protect people from lawsuits for getting involved to help a person in an emergency.

Know the warning signs of heatstroke, which include red, hot, and moist or dry skin; no sweating; a strong rapid pulse or a slow weak pulse; nausea; confusion; or acting strangely. If a child exhibits any of these signs after being in a hot vehicle, quickly spray the child with cool water or with a garden hose — NEVER put a child in an ice bath. Call 911 or your local emergency number immediately.

Help NHTSA and **[Local Organization]** put an end to this preventable tragedy once and for all. For more information on vehicle heatstroke, visit [www.nhtsa.gov/campaign/heatstroke](http://www.nhtsa.gov/campaign/heatstroke). For current data, visit <noheatstroke.org>.

###