

Cars, heat and children a deadly mix warns professor

January 4 2012



Lost keys and misadventure yesterday saw two children rescued from sweltering cars by Victorian paramedics, narrowly avoiding tragedy as the state suffered through a 40 degree day.

Victorian [paramedics](#) have reported 1500 children rescued from cars in the state in the last 12 months. During November and December 2011 nine children were found locked cars, with four such cases in the last four days.

‘On a 29 degree day, with the car's air conditioning dropping the interior to 20 degrees, it takes just 10 minutes for the temperature to more than double to 44 degrees and in 10 minutes it triples to a deadly 60 degrees’ says Professor O’Meara.

‘Children and pets can die or suffer serious brain damage if they’re left in a hot [car](#) for even a short amount of time,’ says Professor O’Meara.

‘Young children are most at risk because they quickly dehydrate. They can lapse into unconsciousness, and may never fully recover.’

While for many parents this advice might seem like a no-brainer, many are still not getting the hint. Aside from the two incidents yesterday, Ambulance Victoria reported six cases of children being locked in cars over a 24 hour period in late November 2011, and many more since. They also said there have been cases of children dying in hot cars.

Professor O’Meara says that even on mild days, leaving children in cars unattended can have catastrophic consequences.

Professor O’Meara offers some hints to keep children safe:

- Always lock your car and secure the keys so that your children can't get to them.
- Warn your children about playing in the car by themselves without adult supervision.
- Install a boot release mechanism, so that they can't get trapped in the boot.
- Remove [children](#) from your car first, then groceries etc.
- Place a reminder on your dashboard so that you don’t forget a sleeping child in the car.
- Be on alert for cars that might have an unattended child left inside.
- Don't leave them in a car, which can heat up quickly, especially on a hot, sunny day.
- If you see a child alone in a car, be sure to call 000 and get the child out ASAP.

Provided by La Trobe University

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