

Mission:

To protect, promote & improve the health of all people in Florida through integrated state, county & community efforts.



Rick Scott
Governor

John H. Armstrong, MD, FACS
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Vision: To be the **Healthiest State** in the Nation

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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A.C.T. TO PREVENT CHILD HEATSTROKE DEATHS

Recent Fort Lauderdale tragedy is ninth death nationwide, Florida's third

Ocala—The Safe Kids Marion County coalition, the Florida Department of Health in Marion County and community partners urge residents to be alert in light of the third Florida death due to a child left in a hot car.

An 11-month old boy died near Fort Lauderdale on Wednesday after being left in the family vehicle. In the U.S., nine children have died this year due to heatstroke after being left in cars.

“Our hearts go out to the families and friends of this child as they cope with this tragedy,” said Health Officer at the Florida Department of Health in Marion County Erin Hess. “It is important for our community to be aware that heatstroke can happen anytime, anywhere and especially now as the summer heat is on the rise.”

Heatstroke, also known as hyperthermia, is the leading cause of non-crash, vehicle-related deaths for children. It occurs when the body is not able to cool itself quickly enough and the body temperature rises to dangerous levels. Young children are particularly at risk because their bodies heat up three to five times faster than an adult's.

“These types of tragedies can happen to anyone, and most of the cases involve loving, caring parents,” said Meaghan Crowley, the department's health education program manager and chair of Safe Kids Marion County. “Babies and young kids can sometimes sleep so peacefully that we forget they are even there.”

We can all help protect kids from heatstroke by remembering the three-step plan to ACT:

A: Avoid heatstroke-related injury and death by never leaving your child alone in a car, not even for a minute. Make sure to keep your car locked when you are not in it so kids do not get in on their own.

C: Create reminders by putting something in the back of your car next to your child such as a briefcase, a purse or a cell phone that is needed at your final destination. This is especially important if you are not following your normal routine.



T: Take action. If you see a child alone in a car, call 911. Emergency personnel want you to call. They are trained to respond to these situations. One call could save a life.

“We can help prevent this tragedy from happening in our community,” said Crowley. “If we all work together and stay alert, we can keep our kids safe from heatstroke.”

Learn more about avoiding heatstroke by visiting the Safe Kids website at www.safekids.org/heatstroke. For more information on the Safe Kids Marion County coalition, call Meaghan Crowley at 352-629-0137, ext. 2195.

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