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## **NEWS RELEASE**

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### **Kanawha-Charleston Health Officer Urges Everyone To Check Their Backseats When It's Hot; Heat Stroke Is A Medical Emergency**

CHARLESTON, W.VA. — Dr. Steven Eshenaur, Kanawha-Charleston Health Officer, urges drivers to be mindful of who is in their vehicle's back seat especially in hot weather, which seems to finally have made it to the Kanawha Valley this year.

"Infants, young children, the elderly and our pets rely on us to keep them cool and safe when it's hot outside," Eshenaur said. "We are always busy multi-tasking and it's easy to get distracted. We need to train ourselves to check our vehicles before we exit to make sure all of our passengers are safely outside, even when we think we are running in somewhere 'just for a second.'"

In extreme heat, seconds turn into minutes and minutes into the kind of time that can result in heat stroke in children, the elderly and pets. "When the air isn't moving much, even leaving windows cracked or open, a vehicle can heat up to dangerous levels quickly. Sometimes, it might seem cool enough to us to not be concerned about the inside temperature of a car, but I wouldn't trust your personal thermostat when it comes to the safety of others on hot summer days. Heat stroke can come on more quickly than you might think," Eshenaur said. "The temperature inside a vehicle will reach 100 degrees in 25 minutes when the outside temperature is only 73 degrees."

When a car heats up and the human body reaches a core temperature of 104 degrees Fahrenheit, heatstroke can occur, causing toxins to flood the body leading to cell death. At 106 degrees, the body begins to convulse. Once a person's body temperature reaches 108 degrees, irreversible brain damage is likely.

According to the National Safety Council, so far in 2023, 10 deaths have been attributed to vehicular heatstroke. On average, 38 children under the age of 15 die this way every year. In 2018 and 2019, a record number of 53 children died after being left in a hot vehicle.

“Always check your back,” Eshenaur said. “Our most helpless passengers depend on us to take care of them.”

Other precautions to take during hot summer weather:

- Dress children in loose, lightweight, light-colored clothing.
- Keep kids and pets hydrated. Sugar and caffeine counter that effect.
- Find a reminder to check your back seat that works for you. You could keep your purse, wallet, briefcase and phone in the back with the child or pet to help you remember to check back there when in a hurry.

“Heat stroke looks like a high body temperature; hot, red, dry skin; a fast, strong pulse; headache, dizziness, nausea and confusion. A person may even pass out,” Eshenaur said. “Call 911 right away, get the person to a cooler place, and try to lower his or her body temp with cool cloths or a cool bath. It might go against instinct, but do not give the person anything to drink. This situation is a medical emergency.”

To learn more about heat stroke, go to

[https://www.cdc.gov/disasters/extremeheat/heat\\_guide.html](https://www.cdc.gov/disasters/extremeheat/heat_guide.html).

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