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Leaving a child or pet inside a vehicle, even with the windows slightly rolled down, can lead to catastrophic consequences and potential criminal prosecution.

The [National Weather Service](#) in Portland is predicting temperatures will likely creep into the upper 80s and low 90s over the next couple of days throughout Multnomah County and the entire Pacific Northwest. **The Multnomah County District Attorney's Office wants to remind the public about the dangers of leaving a child or an animal unattended inside a vehicle during the summer months.**

"We hope we never come across a case in which a child has been injured or dies as a result of being left unattended in a motor vehicle during a hot day," said Multnomah County Deputy District Attorney Chuck Mickley, who is assigned to the [Multi-Disciplinary Child Abuse Team](#). "We cannot stress this enough, leaving a child, especially an infant who is unable to care for themselves, in a hot car unattended is not acceptable and could be a violation of the law."

The death or serious physical injury to a child or pet as a result of being left in a hot car is 100% preventable.



"The most common problem people run into is not thinking ahead," Mickley said. "If you're going to go out, you need to bring all of the right equipment, such as a stroller, a baby bag with food and water, and other items for your child so you can bring them inside with you. Leaving them unattended is not an option. Even a quick errand inside a store could result in the death of a child. Most parents may not realize that infants are not able to regulate their body temperatures like an older child or adult. You also need to remember infants can't unstrap themselves from a car seat and they certainly don't know how to roll down a car window or simply exit the vehicle when hot."

Unfortunately, there have been cases throughout Oregon and here in Multnomah County where children have been left inside a hot car. In

2014, Portland Police arrested a woman who left two children inside a vehicle while she went inside on a 90 degree day to go tanning. When officers arrived, they found the two children covered in sweat and screaming. The woman was charged and convicted of criminal mistreatment in the first degree and recklessly endangering.

Estimated Vehicle Interior Air Temperature v. Elapsed Time						
Elapsed time	Outside Air Temperature (F)					
	70	75	80	85	90	95
0 minutes	70	75	80	85	90	95
10 minutes	89	94	99	104	109	114
20 minutes	99	104	109	114	119	124
30 minutes	104	109	114	119	124	129
40 minutes	108	113	118	123	128	133
50 minutes	111	116	121	126	131	136
60 minutes	113	118	123	128	133	138
> 1 hour	115	120	125	130	135	140

According to Jan Null, CCM, Department of Meteorology and Climate Science, San Jose State University, more than 750 children have died due to pediatric vehicular heatstroke since 1998. On a day where the outside air temperature is 90 degrees, the estimated vehicle interior air temperature is predicted to be at 109 degrees in just 10 minutes and 133 degrees in 60 minutes, according to Null's research. Null runs the website www.NoHeatstroke.org.

(Used with permission from Jan Null, CCM, Department of Meteorology and Climate Science, San Jose State University)

On a day where the outside temperature is 80 degrees, a car with its windows rolled up, will heat up to 114 degrees in 30 minutes.

The [American Veterinary Medical Association](#) reports each year hundreds of pets die from heat exhaustion because they are left in parked vehicles. Unlike humans, dogs and cats don't have the ability to sweat, which is a way for the body to cool itself.

"You just have to leave your pets at home when the weather becomes this hot," said Multnomah County Deputy District Attorney Nicole Jergovic, who has received specialized training in prosecuting animal abuse and neglect cases. "Vehicles will heat up too fast during the spring and summer months. You can't take the risk of leaving an animal behind. It might seem harmless to leave your pet in the car and then go see a mid-morning movie or to go shopping but by the time you get out, the sun will have turned your car into an oven putting your animal at serious risk of injury or death."

Multnomah County is a very pet-friendly place to live, but sometimes pets aren't welcomed unless they are service animals.

"Even in the most extreme conditions, it's safer to leave a pet at home than to bring them in a car on a hot day," Jergovic said. "Pets will often times look for the coolest spot to lay down when at home. It maybe tile or linoleum flooring or simply an area that's out of direct sunlight. When a dog or cat is left behind in a car, they can't open the door or roll down the window. They are trapped and we owe it to them to protect our pets."



There are several laws in Oregon to protect pets from abuse or neglect. The most common statute used to prosecute people who intentionally leave an animal in a hot car is animal abuse in the second degree, which is a Class B misdemeanor. The law states that animal abuse in the second degree can become a Class A misdemeanor in certain circumstances. Other laws designed to protect animals and hold offenders accountable include animal neglect in the first degree, animal abuse in the second degree, animal abuse in the second degree and aggravated animal abuse in the first degree.

"In these hot car cases, Oregon law states that a person is guilty of animal neglect in the first degree if they intentionally, knowingly, recklessly or with criminal negligence fail to provide minimum care for an animal in their custody or control and the failure to provide care results in serious physical injury or death to the animal," Jergovic said. "Like humans, animals can suffer heat stroke which can have lasting physical and behavioral consequences."

Multnomah County Animal Services (MCAS) has posted information on its [website](#) that will help pet owners keep our four-legged friends cool in hot weather. According to MCAS, when [dogs get very hot](#), they will get as low as they can in their space. If a dog in a hot car is on the floor of the vehicle and is minimally responsive, this is a sign that the animal is in serious danger.

In 2017, Oregon Governor Kate Brown signed a law that makes it legal for members of the public to use reasonable force to enter a vehicle and remove pets or children in imminent danger of suffering harm if certain requirements are met, as outlined in [Oregon House Bill 2732](#).

Multnomah County Animal Services and law enforcement must be notified of your emergency entry into the vehicle prior to or soon after the child or pet is removed. You must also remain with the removed child or pet in a safe location near the vehicle until MCAS or law enforcement arrives.

Under Oregon law, if you're convicted of either animal neglect or animal abuse, you cannot possess a domestic animal of any kind for five years.

Remember, if you see a child or pet left unattended inside a vehicle, it is important to respond immediately. In Multnomah County, you can call 9-1-1 to report a life threatening situation. Multnomah County Animal Services dispatchers can be reach by calling 503-988-7387.

Other tips and steps to take if you come across a child or person left in a car unattended:

- Alert others in the area of the situation so someone can help keep an eye on the person or pet;
- Take down a description of the vehicle, including make, model, color and license plate;
- Notify nearby businesses and/or security guards to ask that a public announcement be made;
- If the situation does not appear to be life-threatening contact non-emergency dispatch (The phone number in Multnomah County is 503-823-3333)

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