



# News Release

**Sunrise Fire-Rescue Department**

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Thomas DiBernardo, Fire Chief

## LEAVE OUR VEHICLES EMPTY

### *New awareness campaign launches to prevent vehicular heatstroke*

**SUNRISE, FL (October 25, 2016)** - Sunrise Fire-Rescue and the Broward County Office of Medical Examiner and Trauma Services announced a joint endeavor to educate the public about the dangers of leaving a child, vulnerable adult, or pet alone in a vehicle. Using funding from the Broward Regional EMS Council's 2016 grant to "improve or expand prehospital EMS Systems", the two agencies collaborated to create a new outreach campaign called LOVE – which stands for "Leave Our Vehicles Empty".

Heatstroke is the leading cause of non-crash vehicle deaths for children. Already this year, 39 children in the US have died from vehicular hyperthermia, up 38 percent from the previous year. Florida ranks second in the nation for the number of children dying in hot cars each year.

"These deaths are preventable," said Sunrise Fire Chief Thomas DiBernardo. "The LOVE campaign aims to both alert parents and caregivers to the danger, and to teach them tactics to avoid it."

Whether due to a child being forgotten in the back seat, an unsupervised child gaining access into a car and becoming trapped, or a caregiver knowingly leaving a child behind in a vehicle, the clock is racing. The temperature inside the car can increase by 20°F within just the first 10 minutes, and by 50°F after an hour. Cracking the windows or parking in the shade does not reduce the speed or degree to which the car interior heats up.

If trapped in a vehicle, South Florida's average year-round temperature of 82°F which is well-within the deadly range. Kid's bodies heat up 3-5 times faster than an adult's. Similarly, our beloved pets cannot regulate core body temperature efficiently and will quickly overheat. The same can be true for elderly adults or those with certain medical conditions.

The risk of unintentionally leaving a loved one behind in the car increases when their caretakers are tired, stressed, or distracted. Those dealing with a change in routine - like new parents or a caretaker who's not usually the one to watch the child - are especially susceptible to forgetting a dozing baby or toddler in the back seat. Parents and caretakers need to devise and use multiple preventative strategies such as:

- **Never leave a child, vulnerable adult, or pet alone in a car** - not even for a minute!
- **Look before you lock.** Always check the back seat before closing your car door.
- **Use reminders:** place a needed object in the back seat, and use a phone app or other alert device.
- **Have a plan with your childcare provider** for them to call you if your child does not arrive as expected.
- **Call 911 immediately** if you notice a child, vulnerable adult, or pet left alone in a car.
- **Teach children not to play in cars.** Lock car doors and the trunk and keep keys and remote fobs away from where kids can find them.

More in-depth information and resources – including **LOVE** educational displays and materials for distribution - are now available on the program website, [Broward.org/LOVE](http://Broward.org/LOVE).

For ongoing safety tips and news from Sunrise Fire-Rescue, please visit [www.sunrisefl.gov/FIRE](http://www.sunrisefl.gov/FIRE),

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