



Kate's Story

by Andrea Boe
Grand Forks, ND

Our second child, Kate Lola, was born January 30, 2006, a beautiful and healthy baby girl. We are the typical American family. Both my husband and I worked full-time, and with two small children, we were busy with everyday life. That all changed on June 28, 2006, just five short months after Kate was born.

It was our usual busy morning. Our oldest daughter didn't have daycare and my husband was going to stay home with her. Kate went to a different daycare so I was going to drop her off before I went to work. Normally, I dropped both girls off, but that day was different and so I took a different route to work.

I had fed Kate, dressed her in a new cute pink dress, and then my husband placed her in her car seat. As soon as I put her in the backseat of my van, she was sound asleep. Driving to work, I started thinking about all the things I had to get done at work and home. I somehow got on "autopilot" and arrived at work without dropping Kate off at daycare.

I worked the entire day without ever going back out to my van. In my mind, I had dropped Kate off. After work, I went to her daycare to pick her up; only then did I realize she was still in my van. I don't remember much after that, just people trying to resuscitate her and my agonizing disbelief that I had "forgotten" my own beautiful baby girl.

Nothing has been the same since that day. Our family is slowly trying to heal and I am still trying to understand how and why this happened. The truth is, it happens more than people realize. The reason we are sharing our story is to raise awareness so that this will never happen to another family. Please carefully read the safety recommendations and take them to heart.

The Untold Dangers Of Cars & Heatstroke In Small Children

A child dying in a hot vehicle seems like the least of your worries as a new parent. But the danger is very real. Child fatalities have occurred in the United States due to heatstroke where children have been left in hot cars, trucks, vans and SUV's. Some of these even occurred on days with relatively mild (i.e., 70 degrees F) temperatures. Since 1998, there have been over 800 of these needless tragedies.

Due to current air bag regulations, all young children are being placed in back seats instead of front seats. There have been, on average, 37 fatalities from heatstroke each year, an almost 900% increase from the rate of the early 1990s. Although airbags are an essential vehicle safety measure and children should not be placed in front of them, putting children in the back seat increases the chance of "forgetting" the child is there as you drive from place to place.

On an average summer day, the temperature in a car can rise 34 degrees in 30 minutes - even with the windows "cracked".

Forgetting your child seems like an impossibility to most. However, if you have ever driven from point A to point B and not really remembered how you got there, i.e. drove on "autopilot", you can see how this may happen.

Sometimes parents leave children in the car intentionally while they run into a store, etc. Although this may seem like an easy solution when you just need to "run in for 5 minutes", the outcome could be disastrous. In addition, it is illegal to do this in some states. Never use your vehicle as a babysitter.

In addition to parents accidentally or intentionally leaving children in vehicles, parents also need to be aware of the dangers of children playing in or around vehicles. Children are naturally curious and can easily become locked inside the car or trunk and not able to let themselves out in time.

Please follow the safety instructions and tips on the back side of this handout to prevent a tragedy from occurring.



Tehya's Story

by Dan Carlson
Sisseton, SD

The pain, the loss, the guilt. How could this happen? How could I have made such a mistake? These are the thoughts and feelings that have been going through my mind constantly since August 17, 2005.

My two daughters had just returned from the summer with their mom on August 14. The morning of August 17, 2005, was just like any other morning. I woke up and started getting the girls ready for the day. I was bringing my oldest daughter to spend the day with my mother and my 15-month old daughter, Tehya, to daycare in Browns Valley, MN where I work.

I put Tehya in her car seat and gave her a kiss. I then went and dropped my oldest daughter off with my mom. My mom met me outside, walked over to talk to Tehya, and gave her a kiss. Then, I drove to Browns Valley to drop Tehya off at daycare and go to work. The drive is about a fifteen minute commute. As I drove into Browns Valley, there is a turn that I would always take to bring Tehya to daycare. I didn't turn. Instead, I drove to work, parked my car and went in, the whole time thinking that my precious little baby was at daycare. I was so happy at work that day. I was telling everyone that would listen that my girls were back for the summer and how excited I was. I was thinking about them all day long, but I didn't realize that I had forgot to bring Tehya to daycare until it was too late.

I don't have any answers as to how I could make this kind of mistake, but it is very important for me to tell my painful story in the hopes that this can prevent another tragedy like this from happening again. It is the unthinkable, the unimaginable, but if it can happen to me it can happen to anybody.

It is the absolute worst thing in this world to have to live with. Please don't let this happen to you!

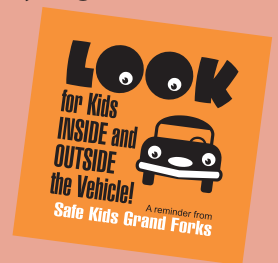


The Untold Dangers Of Heatstroke In Small Children

To avoid the possible mistake of unintentionally leaving your child in your car, please review the recommended safety tips listed below.

SAFETY RECOMMENDATIONS:

- Do not leave a child in an unattended car, even with the windows down.
- Keep a stuffed animal in the carseat and when the child is put in the seat, place the animal in the front with the driver.
- Place your purse, briefcase or your left shoe in the back seat as a reminder that you have your child in the car.
- Make "look before you leave" a routine whenever you get out of the car.
- Put a sticker (such as the one shown/provided) or your own sticker on your car window to remind you to look before you leave.
- Have a plan that your childcare provider will call you if your child does not show up.
- Always lock your car and keep the keys out of older children's reach. If a child is missing, check the car first, including the trunk.
- Teach your children that vehicles are never to be used as a play area.



For additional information about hyperthermia and kids and car safety, visit these websites:

www.safekidsgf.com
www.safekids.org
www.kidsandcars.org
www.noheatstroke.org

