

## **Child Safety**

*Most people today perceive law-enforcement's role in the community as participating in a game of "cops & robbers" where we, the "cops", assume responsibility for catching the "robbers". While that might have been acceptable in the past it is no longer enough, at least, in the opinion of your sheriff which is why I have dedicated myself and members of my office staff to a more comprehensive approach to law-enforcement. Consistent with that approach I am putting forward some information on Child Safety "in and around" your vehicles and addressing such issues as Heatstroke, Backovers and other dangers to children. You can expect to see more articles about Child Safety in future issues of the San Jacinto News Times.*

### **Heatstroke & Asphyxiation**

*Heatstroke and asphyxiation are one of the leading causes of non-crash vehicle-related fatalities among children. Vehicle heatstroke and asphyxiation occurs when a child is left in a hot vehicle, allowing for the child's temperature to rise in a quick and deadly manner. Heat stroke begins when the core body temperature reaches about 104°F. Core body temperature above 107°F is lethal. As a parent, caregiver or bystander, you need to understand the children are more vulnerable to heat stroke than adults.*

#### **Prevention Tips**

- *Make it a habit to look before you lock your vehicle to be assured that no child is left inside the vehicle.*
- *Keep your vehicles locked and keep your keys out of reach of your children; 3 in 10 heat stroke deaths happen when an unattended child gains access to a vehicle's keys.*
- *Act Immediately if you notice a child alone in a vehicle! Protecting children is everyone's responsibility.*

### **Backovers**

*Many children are killed or seriously injured in backover incidents. A backover incident typically occurs when a vehicle coming out of a driveway or parking space backs over an unsuspecting child because the driver did not see the child.*

#### **Prevention Tips**

- *Teach your children not to play in or around vehicles.*
- *Always walk around your vehicle and check the area around it before backing up.*
- *Be aware of small children, the smaller the child the more likely it is you will not see them.*
- *Teach your children to move away from a vehicle when a driver enters the vehicle.*
- *Make sure you look behind while backing up slowly in case your child dashes behind your vehicle unexpectedly.*

- *Many vehicles are equipped with rearview video or warning devices, but they cannot take the place of actively walking around your vehicle to make sure children are out of the way. Do not rely solely on these devices to detect what is behind you.*

### **Power Windows**

*Children can hurt themselves with power windows. Children can be injured when a window closes on their fingers, wrist, or hand. Many children have died through strangulation by power windows!*

### **Prevention Tips**

- *Teach your children not to play with the window switches.*
- *Properly restrained your children in car seats or seatbelts to prevent them from accidentally activating, power, windows, or sunroof.*
- *Always make sure your children's hands, feet, and head are clear of windows before raising the windows.*
- *Never leave the key in the ignition or in the "on" or "accessory" position when you walk away from your vehicle.*
- *If available, activate the "power window lock" switch so that your children cannot play with the windows.*

### **Seat belt Entanglement**

*A child within reach of a seatbelt may become entangled if the child pulls the seatbelt all the way out and wraps the belt around his or her head neck or waist. Most seatbelts have a locking mechanism that is activated when the seatbelt is pulled all the way out from the retractor. This feature is designed for a car seat installation. In instances when the locking feature activates, the child may not be able to free him or herself resulting in a serious safety situation.*

### **Prevention Tips**

- *Do not let your children play in or around vehicles.*
- *Always ensure your children are properly restrained.*
- *Teach your children that seat belts are not toys.*
- *Never let your children lie down or sleep on the vehicle seat instead of being properly restrained. This can result in your child becoming entangled.*

### **Trunk Entrapment**

*Children are naturally curious and love to explore their surroundings. If you leave your children unattended, in or near a vehicle, it may not be long before they are playing in it. Hide and seek is a game where a vehicle trunk could be a target for an unsuspecting child's hiding place. As of September 1, 2001, automobile manufacturers are required to equip all new vehicle trunks with*

*a “glow in the dark” trunk release inside the trunk compartment. If your vehicle is older, and does not have the “glow in the dark” trunk release, ask your automobile dealership about getting your vehicle retrofitted with this trunk release mechanism*

### ***Prevention Tips***

- *Teach your children that vehicle trunks are not areas for playing.*
- *If your child goes missing or is late returning home from playing around your vehicle don't hesitate to check your vehicle trunk immediately.*
- *Lock your car doors and trunk and be sure keys and remote entry devices are out of sight and reach of your children.*
- *Keep the rear “fold down” armrest closed to prevent your children from climbing into the trunk from inside your vehicle.*
- *Trunk Entrapment has similar risk to heat, stroke and asphyxiation; even in cooler temperatures, your vehicle can heat up to dangerous temperatures very quickly. Outside temperatures in the mid 60's°F can cause a vehicle inside temperature to rise above 110°F in a matter of minutes.*

*In conclusion, it's my hope that you will find the information I am providing helpful, and I look forward to sharing more of my knowledge and experiences, and the knowledge and experiences of my senior law enforcement professionals with the community of San Jacinto County and beyond.*

*Sincerely,*

*Greg Capers*

*Sheriff of San Jacinto County*