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Paula Davenport at 208-666-2355 or
pdavenport@kmc.org**Safe Kids campaign: Prevent children's unnecessary deaths inside hot vehicles**

The statistics are heart wrenching: Every year, 37 children die from heat stroke because they're simply forgotten or left inside vehicles that heat up like ovens.

"Children are especially prone to heat stroke because their bodies heat up 3- to 5- times faster than adults. Unfortunately, unattended children have no way of protecting themselves," said Sarah Nielsen, coordinator of Safe Kids Kootenai County. "We want parents and caregivers to take precautions so that this preventable tragedy doesn't happen to them."

Nielsen offers these child safety reminders:

- Call 911 if you see a child unattended in a vehicle.
- Never leave children alone in a car – not even for a few minutes. Temperatures inside vehicles can rise about 20 degrees in just the first hour.
- Put your purse, cell phone, briefcase or gym bag on the floor next to your child to ensure you'll check the back seat before exiting the car.
- Have a plan with your childcare provider: Ask her to call you if your child doesn't arrive at the expected time.
- Set your cell phone or Blackberry to go off at the time you ordinarily drop your child off at daycare.
- Set up an automatic reminder on your computer that asks: "Did you take your child to daycare today?"
- Keep keys and remote entry devices out of children's reach.
- Lock your vehicle only after you've double checked to be sure a child is not inside.
- If a child goes missing, check vehicles and trunks first.

More than half the children who annually die of heat stroke are forgotten by caring adults. And 30 percent of such deaths occur because children climb inside unlocked cars and get trapped. A quick glance can prevent unnecessary child deaths.

Kootenai Health is the lead agency of Safe Kids Kootenai County, an all-volunteer organization dedicated to child safety.

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