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Survey Examines Parents' Risks, Behaviors

Group Says Summer Dangerous Time For Children In, Around Cars

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Most parents perceive the risk of children in and around cars as low, new survey of found.

Video: Experts: Never Leave Kids In Cars

In the study by the Automotive Coalition for Traffic Safety of 900 parents of children ages 12 and younger, 87 percent strongly agreed that parents should do a better job of supervising their children in and around cars.

"Active parental and caregiver supervision is the key to saving children's lives and preventing injuries," ACTS president Phil Haseltine said Thursday. "It's important for parents to realize that one out of 10 motor vehicle-related child fatalities occur off the public streets, in places like driveways and parking lots. A common thread in these tragedies is that they almost always involve an unattended or unsupervised child."

Each year hundreds of children suffer injuries or death from vehicles backing out of driveways, being trapped in hot vehicles or in car trunks, being strangled by power windows, in vehicles inadvertently put in motion by children moving the shift lever and similar types of incidents. ACTS said it is aware of at least 100 of these incidents in the U.S. and Canada this year.

Other findings in the survey included:

- Most parents perceive the risks to unattended children in and around cars as low.
- Two thirds of parents thought it unlikely or very unlikely that a child in their neighborhood might die from the heat after being left alone in a car.
- Less than half (46 percent) thought it was likely that a child in their neighborhood might be hit by a car backing out of a driveway.
- 44 percent of parents surveyed have known someone whose child was hit by a car.

The survey also showed that most parents are taking the correct actions to protect their children in and around cars.

- On average, parents normally hold a child's hand in a parking lot until the child is at least 7½ years old.
- Most parents require their children to be in a safety seat or booster seat until age 6½.
- Nine out of 10 parents say they have never left a child under 5 alone in a car.
- Three out of five parents say the same about a child under 12.

"Our research shows that most parents do a pretty good job of supervising their children," said Haseltine. "But with the onset of summer, kids spend more time outdoors and temperatures rise quickly in enclosed vehicles. Parents and caregivers need to be vigilant and actively supervise children, particularly when they are in or around a motor vehicle."

Haseltine suggested that parents teach children to move away from a car when it is started and that parents walk around the car before getting in to make sure children aren't playing nearby.

He also said to hold their child's hand around streets, driveways and parking lots until the child is at least 7½ years old and to set a good example for the child by not driving until the parent's seatbelt is buckled.

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