

# Media Release



PUBLIC AFFAIRS OFFICE  
FORT LEONARD WOOD, MISSOURI 65473  
VOICE: 573-563-5034  
FAX: 573-563-4012  
BY: Marti Yoshida  
EMAIL: [Martha.yoshida@us.army.mil](mailto:Martha.yoshida@us.army.mil)

Release No. 12-073

July 10, 2012

## Never a safe time to leave children unattended in a vehicle

**FORT LEONARD WOOD, Mo.** – According to National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration’s National Weather Service website, each year, dozens of children left in parked vehicles die from hyperthermia. Hyperthermia is an acute condition that occurs when the body absorbs more heat than it can handle and can occur even on a mild day. Studies have shown that the temperature inside a parked vehicle can rapidly rise to a dangerous level for children, pets and even adults. In this extreme heat and even when temperatures are mild, parents and guardians must make the right decision by not leaving their children unattended in a parked vehicle for any length of time.

Some parents don’t think there will be any legal consequence to leaving their child in a vehicle for just a few minutes while they run into the store to make a quick stop.

Command Policy 22 states that the health, welfare, and safety of children and youth are a parental responsibility and no child or youth will be left unattended either by absence or inattention of the parent, guardian, foster parent, caregiver or “supervisor.” It further outlines that except for extreme emergency conditions, children nine years old and under will not be left alone in a motor vehicle. A violation of this policy subjects military personnel to disciplinary action under the Uniform Code of Military Justice.

(more)

“You should consider Command Policy 22 an order from a superior commander,” said Lt. Col. Laura Calese, deputy staff judge advocate at Fort Leonard Wood. “This policy is signed by a general officer and similar to anything regulated like transporting firearms.”

For civilian dependents, the Military Magistrate Program subjects them to prosecution through federal court that operates here on the installation.

If you are cited for leaving a child unattended in a motor vehicle it triggers several other effects, said Calese. The installation’s Case Review Committee evaluates whether social or behavioral health services are recommended and whether there is a substantiated case of child neglect.

“Sadly, I have been involved in two prosecutions where children died,” said Calese. “These cases are the saddest in the world because there was not intent on the parent involved. We try so hard as a society to say ‘Hey, that’s not right.’”

There are parents who may realize it’s not a good idea to leave a child in the car but they do it anyway because they don’t see law enforcement officers around.

“Literally, when that person walks out of their car leaving a child unattended, their friends and neighbors who disagree with their decision will be on the phone with the police,” said Maj. Scott Hubbard, Fort Leonard Wood’s deputy provost marshal.

“It’s not like people have to go home to use the telephone anymore,” said Hubbard. “Almost everyone has access to a cell phone, and when the MP desk gets the call, our guys are on the scene and we’re catching these people before they can do that.”

The offense could result in filling out paperwork at the MP station or a verbal warning. However, Hubbard said with this heat, people should not expect to get away with just a verbal warning. More than likely, the person should expect to be charged and their chain of command will be notified. They can also be investigated for neglect.

(more)

When the temperature is cooler, people may think that it's okay to leave their child in the vehicle.

“There is really no safe temperature to leave children or even elderly people or pets in the vehicle,” said Randy Sipes, safety director, Fort Leonard Wood Safety Office. “Temperatures in a vehicle will generally go up 10 to 15 degrees higher than the air temperature and the heat escalates quickly over time. Radiant heat off of the pavement, limited air flow in the vehicle, along with leaning up against a seat that is made of nonporous material, especially child car seats, make the heat even worse.”

Leaving the windows open does not significantly decrease the heating rate; and the effects can be more severe on children because their bodies warm at a faster rate than adults. Heat illnesses can occur even with the air conditioner running. Air conditioning in vehicles can barely keep up with radiant heat that is coming through the glass—especially when the vehicle is not in motion.

The bottom line is that kids are always hot and your vehicle's air conditioner can barely keep up so it's best to avoid leaving children unattended.

To report a child left unattended in a vehicle, call the MP desk at 573-596-6141 or 9-1-1.

-30-

Source: <http://www.nws.noaa.gov/os/heat/index.shtml>

Photo caption:

DSC\_0299: Spc. Glenn Miller, 252nd Military Police Company, Traffic Investigation Section, displays the wet bulb thermometer which provides a composite temperature used to estimate the effect of temperature, humidity, and solar radiation on humans.

DSC\_0284: Spc. Glenn Miller, 252nd Military Police Company, Traffic Investigation Section, displays the composite temperature used to estimate the effect of temperature, humidity, and solar radiation on humans. There is never a safe temperature to leave a child unattended in a vehicle.