

NEWS RELEASE

For immediate release

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Pomona Child Dies in Hot Vehicle; Safety Advocates Call on Parents, Daycare Providers To Act

Father's Day tragedy highlights risk to children – seventh death so far this year

(Pomona, June 24, 2015) — A Father's Day tragedy in Pomona has focused Californians' attention on the terrible losses of children in hot cars and led safety experts to deliver a clear message to parents: Don't make the mistake of thinking it couldn't happen to you.

Reports suggest that three-year-old Kiara Li died of a "heat-related injury" Sunday when she was accidentally left sleeping in the family van following a Father's Day outing. Her parents and siblings believed that she had left the vehicle along with everyone else and only found her missing after waking from a nap. The child was found unconscious in the vehicle and died soon after at Pomona Valley Hospital.

Kiara is the seventh child to die from heat in a vehicle this year. Earlier the same day a four year old died in Columbia, SC after getting into an unlocked vehicle. On average 38 children across the U.S. die entirely preventable, heat-related deaths each year.

Stephanie Tombrello, Executive Director of SafetyBeltSafe U.S.A., a nonprofit which campaigns for increased safety for child passengers, said that the reason for the ongoing problem is lack of awareness and parents thinking it couldn't happen to them.

"People forget that their child is in the car for predictable reasons. Many of these cases occur when parents are out of their normal routine, often when they are tasked with taking the child to daycare when they usually head straight to work. Other times, like this one, it's during busy times, holidays, or periods of crisis, when people are distracted. Many people will read this story and think that they could never forget their child – but many responsible and devoted parents have learned in the hardest way possible that they can."

Parents are urged to follow some simple daily routines to prevent heatstroke tragedies:

- [Never leave your child alone in a car.
- [Put something you will need – cell phone, handbag, briefcase etc. – in the back seat so that you have to open the back door every time you park to get it.

- [Keep a large stuffed animal in your child's safety seat. Put the stuffed animal in the front passenger seat whenever your child is in the back.
- [Keep vehicles locked in driveways and garages and keep keys away from children.
- [Make sure your daycare provider has a strict policy of contacting parents soon after a child does not show up as scheduled.
- [Be especially careful at busy times – holidays, celebrations, or periods of crisis – any time that there are changes in routine.
- [If you see a young child alone in a vehicle, intervene – call 911. If the child seems hot or sick, get them out as soon as possible.

Parents and professionals working with children are urged to read 'Fatal Distraction', Gene Weingarten's Pulitzer Prize-winning article in the *Washington Post* on the causes of heat-related vehicle deaths (<http://ow.ly/lDdwU>).

For further information or help with keeping children safe in vehicles, call the Safe Ride Helpline: (310) 222-6860 or (800) 745-SAFE. For Spanish: (310) 222-6862 or (800) 747-SANO.

SafetyBeltSafe U.S.A. is the national non-profit organization dedicated to child passenger safety. The organization is nationally recognized for technical expertise and program excellence. It offers a statewide helpline for parents and professionals, media consultation, and regular safety seat inspections sponsored by California Office of Traffic Safety through the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration.

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