

Children left in hot car

Car can turn into oven in 20 minutes on summer day: study

BY MARTIN DERBYSHIRE
Staff Writer

A Vaughan woman is facing child abandonment charges after police say she left her two children in the increasingly stifling heat of a parked car for more than 40 minutes Tuesday.

The kids, aged nine and three, were left unattended in a parking lot at West-on Road and Hwy. 7 while their 32-year-old mother was shopping, police said.

A passer-by called police around 6 p.m. after noticing the children were alone in the car with the windows rolled up and the keys in the ignition.

Officers say they found the children sweating profusely in the heated interior of the car and called for an ambulance. The children were deemed unharmed.

Temperatures can rise quickly in the confined space of a car, like an oven, according to the Canada Safety Council. The heat can overwhelm a child's ability to regulate his or her internal temperature, the child can rapidly go into shock and circulation to vital organs can fail.

We've all heard the horror stories of children suffering from extreme heat exhaustion. It is extremely dangerous.

According to a study on rising temperatures in parked cars and the effect on children done by Dr. Oded Bar-Or, a pediatrician and director of the Children's Exercise and Nutrition Centre at McMaster University, extreme heat affects infants and small children quicker than adults. In fact, because of their size, a child's core temperature can increase three to five times faster than an adult.

The study found within 20 minutes, the air temperature in a previously air-conditioned small car exposed to the sun on a 35 C day exceeded 50 C. Within 40 minutes, the temperature soared to 65.5 C.

The study also said leaving a window slightly open did little to prevent the temperature from rising to a level that is dangerous for children.

"Under no circumstances should children be left in a vehicle. Regardless of whether it's hot out or not," York Regional Police community services bureau Sgt. Ricky Veerappan said. "We've all heard the horror stories of children suffering from extreme heat

exhaustion. It is extremely dangerous."

Officers consider a variety of circumstances, including the temperature outside and the length a child is left, before laying a charge, said Det. Const. Antonietta Passarelli.

Det. Const. Passarelli is aware of three similar charges being laid in her seven years as an officer in York Region.

"Regardless of weather or tempera-

ture, a child should never be left unattended because they're left open to any kind of risk. It's just common sense, unfortunately some people don't apply it," she said.

Residents should call police at 1-866-876-5423 if they see any children left unattended in a car this summer.

The mother in this case is to appear in court Aug. 17.

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