

Five Seconds Could Save the Life of a Child

Safe Kids Columbus reminds parents to spot their tot before starting the engine

Columbus, GA — In that rush to get to the store before it closes or in the frenzy of trying to get to the airport before your flight leaves, the focus is often on what is in the car – not what is around it. Safe Kids Columbus encourages anyone driving a car to walk completely around it before getting in and starting the engine to check for children.

In 2007, it is estimated that there were 5,000 injuries and 205 deaths to children under age 14 as a result of being hit by a vehicle in a driveway or parking area in the United States. These incidences are known as “backovers” or “frontovers,” depending on direction. “We believe these injuries and deaths are preventable as too many result from a driver not seeing children who might be playing, running after or standing near their vehicle,” says Christy Hubbard, Safe Kids Columbus coordinator. “What is truly tragic about these stories is that often, the drivers are friends or even family members.”

Parents and caregivers can follow these low-tech tips to help make sure that children remain safe around cars:

- Before getting in the car and starting the engine – walk all the way around the parked vehicle to make sure children are not under or behind it. When possible, engage older kids as helpers to accomplish this.
- Use a “Spot the Tot” window sticker as a reminder to walk completely around the vehicle before every trip. Contact Safe Kids Columbus for information on how to obtain one of these stickers.
- Ensure that young children are always accompanied by an adult when getting in and out of a vehicle.
- Identify a safe play area for children to use far away from parked or moving vehicles.
- Identify a safe spot for children to go when nearby vehicles are about to move.
- When walking near moving vehicles, in driveways, in parking lots, or on sidewalks – make sure to firmly hold the hand of each child that is with you.
- Avoid using driveways as play areas if moving cars have access entering or exiting these areas.

“No matter how important it is at that moment for you to get to your destination on time,” says Christy Hubbard, “taking a five-second walk around your car to make sure that children are not in harm’s way could save your family and your child from a lifetime of physical and emotional pain.”

To learn more about keeping your children safe in and around cars, call Safe Kids Columbus at (706) 321-6183 or visit www.safekidscolumbusga.com.

The Spot the Tot program, created by Safe Kids Utah, was extended to all Safe Kids coalitions in 2006 and is a part of the Safe Kids Buckle Up Program, the comprehensive child passenger safety program of Safe Kids USA. In partnership with General Motors since 1997, Safe Kids Buckle Up has inspected 1.2 million car seats; held approximately 60,500 car seat checkup events around the country; donated more than 426,000 car seats to families in need and educated more than 20 million parents and caregivers. In addition, the program has created innovative activities that go beyond crash protection by educating families on other dangers children face in and around vehicles such as hyperthermia and backover/frontover risks.

Safe Kids Columbus works to prevent accidental childhood injury, the leading killer of children 14 and under. Its members include public safety agencies, teachers, EMTs, county commissioners, health educators, nurses, civic groups, faith-based organizations, public health organizations, local government, and many others concerned about the well being of our children. Safe Kids Columbus is a member of Safe Kids Worldwide, a global network of organizations dedicated to preventing accidental injury. Safe Kids Columbus was founded in 1998 and is led by the Columbus Health Department.

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