

July 2013

Emergency Preparedness Pointers

The Heat Trap

Summer has arrived in a big way as temperatures soar to over 100° Fahrenheit (F). Many people will jump in their cars to escape the heat and head to one of the many cooler climates located around Idaho. The car can be a form of escape or a deadly trap in the heat. Every year in the U.S., children and pets die from being left in enclosed vehicles. These preventable tragedies require awareness and a few simple rules.

No Escape For The Heat

A vehicle is like a mini-greenhouse. Shortwave radiation from the sun penetrates transparent surfaces (glass) without creating any real warming. However, the shortwave energy does heat objects that it strikes like dashboards and car seats. These objects can reach temperatures of 180° to 200° F. These heated objects give off longwave radiation which cannot escape back through the glass. This conduction and convection process is very efficient at heating the surrounding air. Within an hour, temperatures inside a car can be 30° - 40° F hotter than outside air temperatures. This means that even on a moderate day, outside temperature of 80° F, the interior of a vehicle can reach 120° F in one hour. Contrary to popular belief, leaving the windows slightly open will not significantly reduce this heating rate.

Simple Rules For Safety

- 1.) Never leave passengers in an enclosed vehicle when it is warm outside. Children are especially vulnerable as their bodies warm at a significantly faster rate than adults.
- 2.) After ensuring that all people and pets are out of the vehicle, lock the doors, even at home, so that children or pets cannot get accidentally trapped inside an unattended vehicle.
- 3.) Before putting children in a vehicle, make sure the seating surfaces and safety equipment are not too hot. Child safety seats, harnesses and buckles can all become very hot.

The majority of the increase in temperature inside a vehicle occurs during the first half-hour and can accelerate heat related illness. Heat stroke can occur when the body's temperature exceeds 104 ° F. This temperature will overwhelm the brain's ability to control temperature. Once this occurs symptoms may include, dizziness, disorientation, agitation, confusion, seizure, loss of consciousness and or death.

Summertime Evacuation

Disasters can occur at anytime. Summer wildfires have caused evacuations all over the west this year. Evacuating a home requires planning and the addition of summer temperatures adds more considerations to the mix. Here is a review of a few evacuation principles with summertime considerations added:

-  If you know that an evacuation is likely, keep a full tank of gas in the vehicle. Otherwise, keep a half of tank of gas in the vehicle at all times. Disasters can cause power outages, which means that you will not be able to pump gas. Having enough fuel to get to safety is critical and during the summer, you'll likely be using the air conditioning which increases fuel consumption.
-  Evacuate as soon as you know you must. The longer you wait, the longer the lines of traffic will be with people leaving the area. Sitting in traffic with the air conditioning on can burn a lot of fuel and increase the risks of the car overheating. Follow the designated evacuation routes if given.
-  Know where you are going. Your destination may be dependent on who is in the vehicle. Emergency Shelters are an option, but do not accept pets. If family members have conditions that will not do well in heat, evacuate to a predetermined cooler location outside the affected area. This may require a trip out of town if the power is out. If you are evacuating with pets, you need a location where they can be housed safely. You will not be able to leave them in your vehicle in the shelter parking lot. Identify pet friendly hotels outside the area before hand to create a viable option in this case.

