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Tragedies From Heat Can Be Prevented

Each year an average of between 600 - 700 heat-related deaths occur in the United States. Hyperthermia, a situation where the body’s natural cooling ability is overwhelmed, is one of the leading causes of heat-related deaths. According to San Francisco University, during the period from 1998 through 2010, over 450 children have died as a result of being left in hot vehicles.

The AccuWeather.com Forensics Team was called upon to investigate the weather conditions at the scene of the death of a child, left in a vehicle parked in the sun. Testimony by the caregiver was that conditions at the time were clouds and sun, breezy and comfortable.

The team found that the sky was clear during the entire afternoon. At the time of the incident, winds were averaging 10 to 15 mph and the outside air temperature in the shade at a height of six feet above the ground was approximately 75 degrees. Official temperatures are measured in this way, but this system of measurement can be very misleading when determining the temperature for a nearby area because of the different variables present.

The team found that the air temperature in an area exposed to the sun at a couple of feet above the ground over paved surfaces was 10 to 20 degrees higher than that compared to the shade. The forensics team, working with the AccuWeather.com Forecasting Department, suggested days when the weather would be similar to that of the incident, in order for police to duplicate the conditions inside the vehicle.

Based on the information provided by the AccuWeather.com team, the police determined that the temperature inside the vehicle, parked in direct sunlight with its windows rolled up, had exceeded 120 degrees.

The team of Forensic Meteorologists at AccuWeather.com will use their combined meteorological experience of over 100 years to examine all relevant weather data and supply you with the facts and findings via verbal consultation or a written, signed report, as well as expert testimony.

There is no fee for the initial phone consultation. Give the AccuWeather.com Forensics Department a call at 814-235-8626 during normal business hours between 8:30 a.m. and 3:30 p.m. Eastern, Monday through Friday or leave a voice mail in confidence and someone will get back to you.