



## AMHERST POLICE DEPARTMENT

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The Amherst Police Department routinely gets calls during the summer months to check on the welfare of animals that are left in hot vehicles. Many of the calls are from passer-bys who observe these animals inside vehicles for prolonged periods. According to PETA's website, animals can sustain brain damage or even die of heatstroke in just *15 minutes* in a locked vehicle. Our Department gets many of these calls about pets left unattended in vehicles parked at shopping centres. In most cases, responding officers have noticed that windows in the vehicles have been cracked open and the animals have NOT been observed to be in distress. It is advisable however, to keep animals at home if you are planning a shopping excursion. Even cracking the window slightly does little to alleviate the heat stress that an animal will experience. The summer heat is finally here and the humidity is causing the temperature to rise above 30 degrees Celsius. Keep in mind that a dog can only cool himself off through panting, and without water will become dehydrated fairly quickly.

The U.S. National Highway Traffic Safety Administration reported that cars parked in direct sunlight can reach internal temperatures up to 55° C – 78° C when outside temperatures are 27° C – 38° C. Within the first 10 minutes, it was also reported that the temperature in an enclosed vehicle will rise (on average) 82 percent of its eventual one hour rise.

The public is advised to call the police if they observe animals unattended in hot vehicles. A recent incident involving the Halifax Regional Police had an officer respond to an animal in distress call. The officer attended the scene and felt that the animal's health was in jeopardy and took the necessary actions to preserve its life. In this particular case, that action was to smash the rear windshield out of the truck to get to the dog. I applaud the actions of this officer and Amherst residents must be aware that Amherst officers will do the same thing here if the need arises.

While our department does not often receive complaints about children left in vehicles, it still needs to be addressed. These incidents are treated very seriously and reports of children left in vehicles will most likely result in a referral to Children and Family Services. A medical report from the College of Wisconsin reported that a child has a lower sweating capacity than adults and are more susceptible to heat since they cannot effectively cool down by sweating. They also have a greater surface area to body mass ratio and therefore absorb more heat on a hot day. High body temperatures can cause brain damage or heat stroke or death. The recent case of Justin Ross Harris, the father whose son died after he left him in a hot car has made international headlines. The sad reality is that this is not an isolated incident. On average, 38 children die of vehicle heat related deaths each year in North America. Hyperthermia can set in which quickly causes damage to the brain and other vital organs.

The summer is a time for vacations and fun but all residents must be aware that heat related injuries/deaths in vehicles happen extremely fast. There is no excuse to leave any person or animal in your vehicle “even if it’s only for five minutes”. The consequences could be deadly and leave families and loved ones lives changed forever.

Amherst residents who observe children or animals left in vehicles on hot days are advised to contact the Amherst Police Department at 902-667-8600. If the animal/child is in immediate need for emergency care please dial 911.