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## **Riverside County officials hope purple ribbons remind residents of the dangers of leaving children in hot vehicles**

Hundreds of purple ribbons will soon adorn trees and buildings at several Riverside County offices, simple reminders for parents and other about the dangers of leaving children inside hot vehicles.

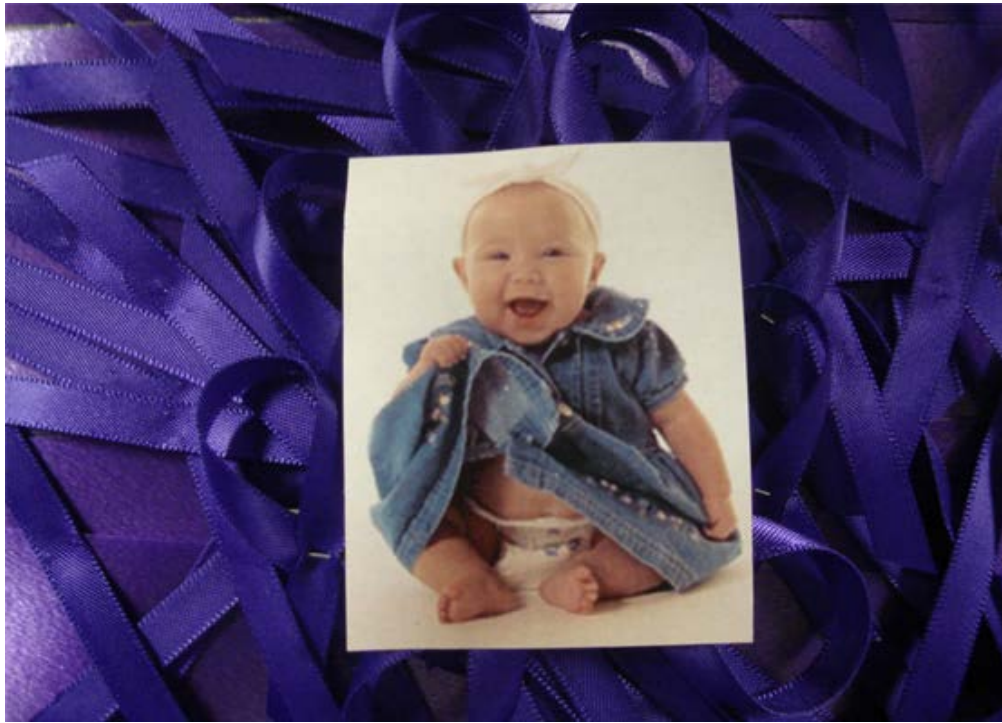
Purple Ribbon Month has been celebrated in Riverside County for years as health officials and others urge adults to protect children from the rising temperatures that build up inside parked vehicles left in the heat. The month-long observation honors Kaitlyn Russell, a 6-month-old Corona girl who died in 2000 after being left in a hot van.

“It has been more than 10 years since Kaitlyn’s death, but the lessons that we took from that tragedy are as relevant today as they have ever been,” said Susan Harrington, director of the Department of Public Health. “The purple ribbons provide the community a small but effective reminder to all adults to protect the most vulnerable of us all.”

In an effort to prevent these needless tragedies, health officials are urging all parents and caregivers: Never leave a child in a vehicle unattended; Make it a habit to look in the backseat whenever you get out of a car; and always lock the car and put the keys out of reach. If you ever see a child left alone in a hot vehicle, call 9-1-1 right away.

According to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, heatstroke is the leading cause of non-crash vehicle fatalities for children 14 and under. In fact, one child dies from heatstroke nearly every 10 days from being left in a hot vehicle.

Along with the Health Department, the Riverside Police Department, Riverside County Regional Medical Center and the California Highway Patrol are observing Purple Ribbon Week. In January 2001, California passed a law making it illegal to leave a child 6 years or younger unattended inside a motor vehicle without the supervision of someone at least 12 years old.



A photo of Kaitlyn Russell, a 6-month-old Corona girl who died in 2000 after being left in a hot van, is surrounded by purple ribbons. August is Purple Ribbon Month and some county offices will be decorated with the ribbons to remind residents of the dangers of leaving children in hot vehicles.