



The Corporation of the Town of Tecumseh

Corporate Services & Clerk

To: Mayor and Members of Council

From: Jennifer Alexander, Deputy Clerk & Manager Legislative Services

Date to Council: November 27, 2018

Report Number: CS-2018-35

Subject: Unattended Children and Pets in Vehicles during Hot Temperatures

Recommendations

That Report No. CS-2018-35 Unattended Children and Pets in Vehicles during Hot Temperatures **be received** as information.

Background

At the August 14, 2018 Regular Council Meeting, Council requested a report on the measures available to prevent heat exhaustion or hyperthermia deaths of unattended children and pets in vehicles during extreme hot temperatures.

Hyperthermia occurs when the body's heat-regulation system cannot handle the heat in your environment once your body temperature reaches 40 degrees Celsius. Children are especially vulnerable to hyperthermia because of their body size and relative inability to release heat compared to adults.

An average of 37 child deaths occur every year in the United States from hyperthermia. (Statistics are not available in Canada). In 70 percent of these cases, the child was either forgotten or unintentionally left in the vehicle. The number of deaths related to hyperthermia is relatively low compared to other driving fatalities. The number one cause of child vehicle fatalities is accidents.

It is a similar situation with dogs left unattended in vehicles during extreme hot weather. Dogs have a limited ability to sweat. Even a short time in a hot environment can be life threatening. A dog's normal body temperature is 39°C. A temperature of 41°C can only be tolerated for a very short time before irreparable brain damage or death occurs. The Ontario Society for the Prevention of Cruelty of Animals (SPCA) receives hundreds of reports annually of dogs left

unattended in vehicles, and yet pet owners are not getting the message of how dangerous it is for pets to be left locked up in a vehicle during hot days.

The *Highway Traffic Act, R.S.O, 1990*, regulates driving in Ontario, which only addresses the driver's responsibility to ensure that a child passenger is secured in a motor vehicle. The scope of legislation does not address when the vehicle is not in operation. However, if the police determine the child is in danger in a motor vehicle, charges can be laid under section 215 of the *Criminal Code, RSC, 1985*, for failing to provide the necessities of life, or section 218, child abandonment, which carries a penalty of up to five (5) years' imprisonment.

For animals, SPCA officers can charge a driver with an offence, under section 11.2 of the *Ontario Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act, R.S.O 1990*, when an animal has been placed in a situation or a position that has caused distress. Officers are experienced in identifying a distressed animal and how to respond accordingly. If the police are called, depending on the severity of the situation, a driver can be charged under section 446 of the *Criminal Code* - causing damage or injury to an animal - which carries a penalty of up to two years' imprisonment.

Comments

There are several devices available on the market that are designed to remind drivers that children are in the vehicle. Some of these measures could be used for pets. The following is a sample of how the various sectors have responded to these tragic incidents with the various preventative measures now available for parents or caregivers.

Car Seat Technology

Some car seat manufacturers have developed innovative features built into their car seats to provide reminders for parents when a child is secured in their seat. Sensorsave technology is available in selected car seats from the brand Evenflo. This technology has a receiver that is installed into a vehicle's diagnostics and computer system. The receiver communicates with the car seat's chest clip that provides a chiming sound once the vehicle is turned off, alerting the driver that the child is still in their seat. This feature is not available in all car seats, as this technology is not a standard from Transport Canada, the legislative body that regulates car seat standards in Canada.

Rear Seat Reminder System in General Motors Vehicles

In select General Motors vehicles, the rear seat reminder system uses back door sensors that are activated when either the rear door is opened, or closed, and the vehicle is turned on. When the vehicle is parked, the dashboard chimes as a reminder for the driver to check the back seat as they exit the vehicle.

After Market Devices

There are a few after market devices available for purchase to assist in reminding parents and caregivers that children are in the vehicle. The more popular devices are the Driver's Little Helper System and Waze.

The Driver's Little Helper System is an after market product that parents can purchase to install with their existing car seat. The sensor system is a battery-operated device that is installed under the car seat padding and synced to an app on the driver's phone. The app features safety measures including text, or email, notifications once the vehicle is parked. The user can set the timing frequency of emails, the fastest being every minute. If the driver does not respond to the notifications, this app will email or text all your emergency contacts informing them that a child is in the vehicle.

Waze is a phone app that provides traffic and navigation to drivers. In this app, users can select Waze Child Reminder, a setting to alert the driver to check the backseat once they have reached their destination. This app will not alert the driver during an impromptu stop, however, it does provide the added insurance of building a habit to remember to check the backseat.

Public Awareness

In recent years, the SPCA and the OPP have campaigned on the dangers of leaving children and pets unattended in vehicles during hot weather, in an effort to change driver behaviour. Various social media outreach, newspaper advertisements, articles, and websites have raised the awareness of extreme hot temperatures and the dangers of leaving children unattended in vehicles. This is not just a summertime problem. Cold weather could also pose hypothermia risks if children and pets are left inside a vehicle. Authorities will continue to provide outreach and education to decrease the number of incidents due to extreme weather.

Consultations

OPP

Financial Implications

There are no financial implications.

Link to Strategic Priorities

Applicable	2017-18 Strategic Priorities
<input type="checkbox"/>	Make the Town of Tecumseh an even better place to live, work and invest through a shared vision for our residents and newcomers.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Ensure that the Town of Tecumseh's current and future growth is built upon the principles of sustainability and strategic decision-making.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Integrate the principles of health and wellness into all of the Town of Tecumseh's plans and priorities.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Steward the Town's "continuous improvement" approach to municipal service delivery to residents and businesses.
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Demonstrate the Town's leadership role in the community by promoting good governance and community engagement, by bringing together organizations serving the Town and the region to pursue common goals.

Communications

Not applicable

Website

Social Media

News Release

Local Newspaper

This report has been reviewed by Senior Administration as indicated below and recommended for submission by the Chief Administrative Officer.

Prepared by:

Jennifer Alexander, MPA
Deputy Clerk & Manager Legislative Services

Reviewed by:

Laura Moy, Dipl. M.M., CMMIII HR Professional
Director Corporate Services & Clerk

Recommended by:

Tony Haddad, MSA, CMO, CPFA
Chief Administrative Officer

Attachment Number	Attachment Name
None	None