

**Speaking Notes**  
**Child Passenger Safety Forum**

U.S. Department of Transportation  
Thurs., Sept. 19, 2019

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- Thank you for inviting me here today.
- Since, Dr. Jan Null of San Jose State University began tracking pediatric vehicular heatstroke deaths in 1998, more than 800 children have died of heatstroke from being trapped in a hot car.
- Many of these deaths are attributable to a child being left in a vehicle by a parent or caregiver.
- In reviewing the information surrounding these incidents:
  - We have found that those NOT aware of child heatstroke are more likely to report leaving children alone in a car or truck; and
  - Recently, we have also found that parents and caregivers who ARE aware of child heatstroke, are starting to use technology to remind them to check the back seat when exiting their vehicles.
- Separately, we also know that several automakers are beginning to fit some vehicles with Rear Seat Reminder Systems.
- From this we concluded:
  - One, it is critically important to continue raising general public awareness regarding the dangers related to leaving a child alone in a vehicle; and
  - Two, automakers had an opportunity to supplement necessary public awareness and education efforts by leveraging the emerging use of technology, both by parents and automakers, by implementing means for reminding drivers to check rear seats, where children are most often seated, upon leaving the vehicle.
- Working with Global Automakers and our respective members, we developed an industry commitment to accelerate the fitment of new vehicles with Rear Seat Reminder Systems.
- The industry commitment was publicly announced earlier this month.
- The automakers participating in the commitment are responsible for 99.45% of new vehicle sales in the U.S.
- It is enforceable by the Federal Trade Commission.
- Under the commitment, Participating Manufacturers will:
  - Install a Rear Seat Reminder System in all covered passenger cars and light trucks by Model Year 2025 or sooner.

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- The Reminder System will provide a distinct combination of audible and visual alerts whenever there is the potential presence of an occupant or occupants in a rear seat.
- The commitment provides automakers with the flexibility needed to develop innovative systems meeting the terms of the Commitment. However, the commitment is a floor – not a ceiling – and manufacturers may offer systems or technologies with advanced features.
- For consumers wanting to purchase a vehicle with a Rear Seat Reminder System, the Alliance and Global Automakers, working with their respective members, will be maintaining lists of vehicles by make, model, and model year that are fitted with a Reminder System.
- For policymakers wanting to keep track of the industry’s progress in meeting this Commitment, we will also be publishing automakers annual progress reports – another requirement of the commitment – beginning in 2022.
- Let me conclude by saying that, by working together to establish this industry commitment, we are giving consumers access to Rear Seat Reminder Systems faster than would have been ever possible under a government rulemaking.
- I would be remiss, however, if I didn’t take this opportunity to emphasize that education and awareness remains absolutely critical. It is important to know and remember:
  - It is never OK to leave a child alone in a vehicle for any length of time.
  - It only takes 10 minutes for a vehicle’s interior temperature to rise nearly 20 degrees, and a young child’s body heats up three to five times faster than an adult’s.
  - If you see a child alone in a car, call 911. It is that serious. Emergency personnel want you to call. They are trained to respond to these situations. One call could save a life.
- Thank you.