



## **Alarming Number of Cars Stolen with Kids Inside**

*Things can go wrong in mere seconds when a child is left alone in a vehicle*



Cars are being stolen with children alone in the back seat all over the country far too often and in some of the most unexpected places. Families are being traumatized and expensive AMBER Alerts are being issued as a result of these easily preventable incidents.

**Last month, KidsAndCars.org documented 17 children (+ 4 cases involving dogs) who were taken in a stolen vehicle, one resulting in the tragic death of a teen.** In 2019, KidsAndCars.org documented over 200 children taken in stolen vehicles nationwide.

Thieves watch for vehicles to be left unattended with the engine running or the keys inside. Most of the time, they don't realize that there is a child inside until after they have stolen the vehicle. Car thefts happen even in the safest neighborhoods, outside homes, convenience stores, grocery stores, daycares, restaurants, etc. It only takes a few seconds for a car thief to jump into a vehicle and be gone. Children and pets should *never* be left alone inside of a vehicle, not even for a minute.

"Although the victims of these types of incidents typically survive, it is incredibly distressing for everyone involved. Because this is easily preventable, we can avoid the unnecessary trauma and use of precious law enforcement resources by simply never leaving children alone in vehicles." said Janette Fennell, president and founder of KidsAndCars.org.

On February 6, a 13-year-old **Wichita, KS** girl was dragged to death trying to escape the backseat of her family SUV that was stolen while her family went inside to grab food. Below are the details on the cases KidsAndCars.org documented last month.

Date	City	State	Victims	Location of theft / Notes
2/28/21	Chicago	IL	Children (5) (7)	Parked on street, kids called mom from tablet, found shortly after
2/24/21	Renton	WA	Girl (5)	Grocery store, AMBER Alert, found unharmed
2/17/21	Cleveland	OH	Girl (3), Boy (4)	Parked on street, thief left children along road nearby
2/16/21	St. Paul	MN	Children (2) (4)	Apartment, thief left children outside in cold
2/16/21	Valrico	FL	Girl (1)	Driveway of residence, found 2 hours later,
2/15/21	Honolulu	HI	Infant	Gas station, found along road shortly after
2/12/21	Madison	WI	Child	Restaurant, thief abandoned child in car nearby minutes later
2/9/21	Columbus	OH	Boy (4 mos)	Daycare, AMBER Alert
2/9/21	Cayce	SC	Girl (2) + puppy	Hotel circle drive, found 3 hours later 11 miles away in car
2/7/21	St. Paul	MN	Girl (6)	Walgreens, thief left girl in car a few blocks away
2/6/21	San Francisco	CA	Girl (4), Boy (1)	Residence, AMBER Alert issued, children found 4 hours later
2/6/21	Minneapolis	MN	Boy (1)	Church, AMBER Alert, found nearby 2.5 hours later
2/6/21	Wichita	KS	Girl (13)	Restaurant, <b>FATAL</b>

### The cost of car theft

In 2018 alone, 748,841 vehicles were stolen in the United States, costing vehicle owners more than \$6 billion according to the Federal Bureau of Investigation.

AMBER Alerts and extensive search operations for car theft kidnapping cases have cost taxpayers millions of dollars. One estimate out of Memphis, TN reported the cost to be over \$71,000 in the search for a missing baby taken in a vehicle in March, 2018.

Most importantly, the safety and well-being of children is priceless.

### State Laws

There are currently [21 states](#) that have laws making it illegal to leave children unattended inside vehicles. However, it is important for parents and caregivers to understand that in any state, a person can face child endangerment or neglect charges for leaving a child alone in a vehicle, even if the state does not have a law specifically making it illegal.

Additionally, at least 30 states and some municipalities have varying laws making it illegal to leave vehicles running unattended. These are commonly referred to as anti-idling laws and also help protect the environment.

**Tips for parents and caregivers:**

- Never leave a child alone in a vehicle, not even for a minute.
- If you see a child alone in a vehicle, get involved. Call 911 immediately. If the child is in distress, get them out of the vehicle as quickly as possible.
- Utilize drive-thru or curbside services that don't require you to leave your vehicle
- If a business doesn't offer curbside delivery, call upon arrival and ask them to bring your order to your car. Most people are more than happy to accommodate when you tell them you have small children.
- Keep car doors locked every time you step away from your vehicle and any time you're sitting inside a parked car.
- Understand that a running vehicle can be driven away even if the key fob is not inside the vehicle.

**Car Theft Video PSA: <http://youtu.be/mTa98jQfYTg>**

There are far too many devastating tragedies that could have easily been prevented had a child not been left alone in a vehicle. Besides being abducted during a car theft, children are injured by [knocking cars into gear](#), suffer from [heatstroke](#), become strangled by [power windows](#) and seat belts, start car fires, exit the vehicle and are run over, etc.

For more information on the dangers children face when left alone in vehicles, please visit our [website](#).

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[KidsAndCars.org](#), a national nonprofit dedicated to saving the lives of young children and pets in and around vehicles.