



Vehicle submersion deaths claim the lives of at least 5 children in 2025



Vehicle submersions claim the lives of nearly 400 people annually who could have survived if they had just known what to do and in what order to do it. Vehicle submersion fatalities and injuries occur in two ways - when a vehicle crashes into water or when flood waters sweep a vehicle away.

According to data documented by Kids and Car Safety, **there have been at least the 5 child vehicle submersion fatalities in the U.S. this year.**

- 2/15/25 – A mother and her daughter died after their car was swept away by flash floodwaters during a storm in Bonnieville, Kentucky.
- 2/16/25 – A two-year-old boy and his legal guardians died, while two juveniles survived, after high waters swept their truck into a river in Welch, West Virginia.

- 2/17/25 – A mother and her child were found dead after their car was discovered upside down in a creek in Cranberry, North Carolina.

Additionally, the organization has documented 47 fatal cases and 53 non-fatal cases involving adults.

The true magnitude of the issue can only be understood by looking at several data sources. An annual average of 384 traffic fatalities involved accidental drowning as one of the causes of death (FARS 2004-2007). Additionally, almost 2 out of 3 U.S. flash flood deaths occurred in vehicles from 1995 to 2010 according to Dr. Greg Forbes, former severe weather expert at The Weather Channel. It is important to note that these statistics do NOT include any nontraffic vehicle submersion fatalities (i.e. those occurring on private property).

People must understand that one minute is all the time you have to exit a sinking vehicle safely before the water pressure against the windows becomes too great to get out. **Staying inside a vehicle in water can turn your vehicle into a coffin.**

IF YOUR CAR GOES INTO WATER, YOU HAVE 1-MINUTE TO GET OUT BEFORE IT IS TOO LATE.



Follow these steps IN THIS ORDER to escape quickly



SEAT BELTS off



WINDOW open



OUT window quickly

CHILDREN FIRST (oldest-> youngest)

DO NOT panic.
DO NOT touch your phone.
DO NOT open a door, water will rush into the car fast!
DO NOT wait for the vehicle to sink, your car will become a coffin



- Once out, climb on top of the car, call 911, and determine if there is a path to safety and higher ground. Waiting for help on top of the car might be your safest option.
- Remember, floodwater hides many dangers such as sharp objects, chemicals, bacteria, and strong currents that can harm you. It is not always safe to try to reach safety on foot.
- Practice unbuckling child car seats with your eyes closed, as it may be dark during an emergency.
- Discuss and review the S.W.O.C. steps regularly with your family.

Kids and Car Safety has a life-saving [educational video](#) to help families survive if their vehicle is in water. This information is very important as minutes can be the difference between surviving or not.

Drivers need to remember the public safety campaign slogan, “Turn Around, Don’t Drown,” which has been used for decades. NEVER drive through water. The depth of floodwater can be extremely difficult to determine, and even shallow water can sweep a vehicle away, posing tremendous danger.

"The inside of a vehicle is not a safe place to be during a flood. The pressure from water against the doors and windows can trap passengers inside. The public needs to know what to do BEFORE they're in a life-threatening situation to be prepared and not panic. Getting out is critical for survival," said Janette Fennell, president of Kids and Car Safety.

Remember, **[S.W.O.C. Steps to Escape a Sinking Vehicle](#)**:

- Seatbelts off
- Window open (rear side window)
- Out immediately
- Children first (oldest to youngest)

For more information visit <https://www.kidsandcars.org/vehicle-submersion/safety-tips>