

K-9 SAFETY

Just as we lose too many officers in completely avoidable single-vehicle crashes, the sad truth is that police dogs die in hot cars all too frequently. The Officer Down Memorial page reports at least 64 police K-9s have died on U.S. soil from heat exhaustion between January 2011 and August 2015. According to the Connecticut Police Work Dog Association, another 12 police K-9s have died from heat exhaustion between January and July of 2016.



In South Carolina, K-9 Emma died from heat exhaustion after she was left inside her handler's vehicle for about 90 minutes — although the car was running and the air conditioning was turned on, the air conditioning had malfunctioned.

In August of 2016 a beloved K-9 named Blitz, who worked for the Montgomery County Illinois Sheriff's Office, died in a hot squad car after it appeared that the air conditioning "malfunctioned" and the heat alarm system "failed to go off".

According to petMD, on a 78-degree day, the temperature inside a parked car can soar to between 100 and 120 degrees in just minutes. On a 90-degree day, the interior temperature can reach as high as 160 degrees in less than 10 minutes. Dogs whose body temperatures exceed 106 degrees or higher (not fever-related) can quickly suffer a heat stroke and multiple-organ dysfunction.

Mechanical malfunction of the vehicle and its systems, and handlers who simply forgot that they had left their dogs in their assigned vehicle, account for many K-9 deaths. These deaths are often reported as heat exhaustion.

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Take measures to ensure the safety of your K-9. The tragic death of a police K-9, whether killed in the line of duty, by unintentional neglect of the handler or due to vehicle malfunction, can have a profound effect on not only the handler, but the agency.

Take measures to ensure the safety of your K-9.

- Use window tint for K-9 vehicles;
- Hood louvers that allow engine heat to escape are available;
- Consider cooling vests for your K-9;
- Keep your K-9 adequately hydrated and allow for rest periods when working;
- Ensure that your assigned agency vehicle is equipped with a functional heat alarm system;
- Use new manufactured safety systems and not re-purposed or re-manufactured systems/wiring;
- Do not reuse parts or components when K-9 vehicles are switched out;
- Ensure that heat alarm systems do not interfere with other electronic vehicle systems;
- Regularly test the system to make sure it is in proper working order;
- Install alert devices which chime when the driver's door is opened or when the engine is turned off, that remind you to check your vehicle to ensure your K-9 is not being left inside;
- Safety mechanisms for not only excessive heat, but also engine malfunction, should be implemented;
- Multiple alert methods for excessive heat or equipment malfunction are also recommended. This includes an audible vehicle device, such as the horn or siren, activation of bar/headlights, as well as a pager or cell phone notification;
- Implement written policies and procedures for K-9 safety

Remember – WIN: What's Important Now?

The overall safety of the K-9 is important! Check your vehicle each time you turn it off to ensure your K-9 is not being left inside. Regularly check your assigned vehicle to make sure the safety systems are working properly. Have your assigned vehicle serviced as routine maintenance schedules require, to ensure functionality.

***Please contact FSRMF with any questions
or for additional information at loss.control@fsrmf.org***