

**Remarks Prepared for
David Strickland, Administrator
National Highway Traffic Safety Administration
Heatstroke Media Event
Orlando, Florida
June 13, 2012**

Thank you. I am honored to join all of you today—Safe Kids Worldwide, the Florida Department of Transportation, and everyone here who is working so hard to prevent child deaths and injuries from heatstroke.

I very much appreciate the opportunity to spread the word about The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration's 2012 campaign to raise awareness of

the deadly threat that heatstroke poses to young children in cars.

We were all saddened to learn of the accidental death of a 3-year-old girl who was left in a vehicle in Philadelphia, Mississippi, this past Monday. It's the fourth such fatality this year and it underscores the urgency of our efforts today.

The safety of children is a special area of concern for this agency and this administration. Last year NHTSA intensified its involvement: We convened a first-of-its-kind heatstroke roundtable and conducted a series of town hall discussions in the states worst hit by heatstroke fatalities, including Florida. At that time, in July 2011, the U.S. was on a pace to break records in heatstroke deaths.

NHTSA and the vehicle safety community have the data, ideas, expertise, and determination to make a difference on this issue and prevent any more of these horrific deaths from ever occurring again. And we need your help to make it happen.

This year we are delivering on our promise to bring safety advocates, industry experts, and health and law enforcement professionals together for our public education campaign: "Where's baby? Look Before You Lock."

We have continued our conversations with stakeholders about ways to focus attention on the issue and planned events across the country throughout 2012. We have also commissioned research to evaluate after-market products designed to prevent a child from being

unintentionally left behind in a vehicle. We expect to have those results this summer.

We are working hard to make progress on this issue. There were at least 33 heatstroke deaths last year, down from 49 the year before. We believe we can—and must—end these tragedies altogether. To achieve that goal we need to be sure everyone understands the victims, inadvertent causes, and the role that each of us in every community has to play in preventing child heatstroke.

One tragedy is one too many. In a few moments we are going to hear from Reggie McKinnon, who will share his story—and we are so thankful for his courage and willingness to talk about his personal loss. We hope that by raising awareness of heatstroke deaths we will spare others from facing the same unthinkable tragedy.

Parents and caregivers are the first line of defense for preventing child heatstroke fatalities—but everyone has a role to play. Here are some basic prevention tips we and our safety partners agree can be helpful in avoiding heatstroke tragedies.

We know that a majority of the analyzed fatalities occurred due to a change in the driver’s routine, so be mindful when you park your car. Never leave an infant or a young child unattended in a vehicle—even if the windows are partly open or the air conditioning is on. Always check the backseat before walking away from a parked vehicle. And if you see a child alone in a car, call the police immediately.

Ultimately, we want everyone to think "Where's Baby? Look Before You Lock" every time they get out of their cars.

We will now hear from Reggie McKinnon.

[Reggie McKinnon speaks]

Thank you for sharing your story. I know it is extremely difficult. Together, we can make a difference. We can put an end to heatstroke deaths.