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Moraga Police Department investigates death of child stranded in vehicle

By Nick Marnell

A 19-month old toddler died Sept. 11 after being left unattended in a car on Hardie Drive for several hours by a family member.

Moraga police and Moraga-Orinda Fire District emergency personnel responded to a medical call around 4 in the afternoon and discovered a child who was not breathing. Paramedics performed life saving measures and transported the child, Lily Aracic, to John Muir Medical Center in Walnut Creek, where she was later pronounced dead.

The outside temperature at the time first responders arrived at the scene was approximately 80 degrees.

"It is an absolute tragedy," Moraga Police Chief Jon King said. "It has impacted everyone, including my officers, firefighters, the dispatchers, the people in the emergency room." It was the first incident of its kind he can remember in Moraga, King said, and the third this year in California.

The chief outlined preventive measures for drivers who bring a child along for the ride. "Look before you walk," he said, advising drivers to make sure that a child, or a pet, or even valuables like a laptop or a briefcase, are in plain view in the back seat of the car. He suggested purposely leaving something in the back seat near the passenger, like a phone, or a purse, something you absolutely have to get, and no way would forget.

King also recommended setting up checks and balances between the driver and the destination. "If a child should be dropped off somewhere at 9:00, and the child has not arrived by 9:15 or so, have the receiving party call just to check on the delay," he said.

The incident is under investigation by the Moraga Police Department. The determination of the exact cause of Aracic's death is pending a report by the Contra Costa County Coroner's office.

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