

The following Press Release was issued by HSE West and the Irish Association for Emergency Medicine. Dr Gerry Lane is the IAEM's spokesperson on Road Safety.

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Spot Your Tot before Taking Off

During the good weather, many more children are outside playing on farms and in gardens. While it's great to see them out enjoying the fresh air and sunshine, it is also important to be more careful when taking off in your car or driving your tractor. A five-second walk around the car before you get in could save a child's life.

Dr. Gerry Lane, Consultant in Emergency Medicine, Letterkenny General Hospital says: ***It is widely recognized that many vehicle-related deaths and injuries of children happen at home and don't just happen in traffic. Death and serious injury can occur when children are struck by cars and other vehicles in driveways, car parks or on farms and, unfortunately, children can die just outside their own houses.***

Dr. Lane adds: ***We should teach our children that vehicles are not toys and children of any age should never be left alone in or around them. Segregate your kids from your cars. Parents should be aware that many of these preventable injuries and deaths occur in driveways or parking lots when drivers are unaware that children are near vehicles or, perhaps, are playing hide and seek under the wheels. So SPOT YOUR TOT before you move your car.***

During the summer months, there is an increase in the number of children aged between 1 and 14 that are brought to hospital Emergency Departments after being struck by a vehicle in a driveway or parking area. Since the arrival of the fine weather, Dr Lane, who is based in the ED at Letterkenny General Hospital, has witnessed an unprecedented increase in motor-related injuries of small children hit by parental vehicles as the driver is pulling out of house driveways or car parks.

Dr Lane says: ***I would advise any parent or adult who is about to go on a car journey to check around the car to make sure that a child isn't playing nearby. It's difficult to see a toddler or child when you're inside the car and about to pull off or manoeuvre a vehicle, so a five-second check beforehand could be the difference between a child's life and death. It's a parent's worst nightmare to be the cause of harming a child in this manner, so it is worth taking the time to make sure the area is clear before moving off. SPOT YOUR TOT and put your kid somewhere safe.***

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Farmers especially are reminded that the farm and farm vehicles are dangerous, even deadly, attractions to small children, and kids and tractors can be a deadly combination. According to Dr. Lane you shouldn't even consider taking your child out on a farm vehicle unless they are safely restrained in a regulation restraint. He says that you may metaphorically break your kid's heart by refusing a request to go on the tractor with you, but you may literally shatter their small body if they fall or are run over. So SPOT YOUR TOT or leave him or her at home.