

Mother's trial on leaving children in hot car while shopping set in October

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A 25-year-old woman has been ordered to appear in Scott Superior Court on October 10 to stand trial on two counts of Class D felony neglect of a dependent.

Mariah Douglas, Austin, apparently took four children with her to Wal-Mart in Scottsburg on July 16. She allegedly left two of the children, a ten-year-old boy and a three-year-old boy, in the family car.

Persons who saw the two youngsters in the Mustang called for help. Sgt. Joe Nicholson with the Scottsburg Police Department was dispatched to the scene.

The car was parked with its windows up, the officer said in his probable cause affidavit. The heat index was 104 degrees, he noted.

Sgt. Nicholson talked to the ten-year-old, asking if he was okay. The boy replied that he was but that he was hot. The three-year-old was found "...laid over in the back seat on the driver's side covered in sweat..." the affidavit related. Sgt. Nicholson said he could not tell if the younger child was breathing or not.

He called dispatchers and requested Scott County EMS. As the officer was getting the child out of the car, the little boy began waking up and crying for his mother.

When the mother returned to the car with the two other children, she reportedly told Sgt. Nicholson that the younger boy had been asleep when she arrived at the store and she did not want to wake him to take him inside. The affidavit stated that Douglas said she left the older boy with him, saying the ten-year-old knew how to operate the car and turn on the air conditioning if they got hot. Douglas appeared in Scott Superior Court on Monday, July 22, and entered a not guilty plea to the charges. Her bail was fixed at \$15,000 corporate surety or 10% cash, and the court date was assigned.

She was provided with the services of a public defender.