

DRIVE SMART Virginia

drivesmartva.org



For Immediate Release

April is Distracted Driving Awareness Month

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RICHMOND, VA – April is Distracted Driving Awareness Month in Virginia. DRIVE SMART Virginia’s “Buckle-Up, Phone Down” campaign (link below) reminds drivers that, in Virginia, it is illegal to hold a communications device (cell phone) while driving.

<https://www.drivesmartva.org/current-projects/buckle-up-phone-down/>

There were 1,498 crashes in Virginia last year involving drivers using cell phones. Those crashes killed 7 people and injured 757. (DMV TREDs data) Every day about 8 people in the United States are killed in crashes reported to involve a distracted driver. (NHTSA)

There are 3 types of driver distraction:

- Cognitive (mind is somewhere else)
- Manual (hand or hands not on the wheel)
- Visual (eyes not on the road ahead)

“Using a cell phone while you are behind the wheel is one of the most egregious forms of distracted driving,” said Janet Brooking, Executive Director of DRIVE SMART Virginia. “It involves a deadly combination of cognitive, manual, and visual inattention.”

In April, DRIVE SMART Virginia’s “Buckle-Up, Phone Down” campaign will remind motorists to wear their seat belt and put the phone down while driving. A seat belt is your best defense against a distracted driver.

Some tips and statistics:

- Buckle-Up! It’s your best defense against an impaired, distracted, or reckless driver.
- Put down your phone. You need your eyes on the road and both hands on the wheel so you can react to hazards (such as distracted drivers).

Do you know...

Nearly 20% of Virginia drivers do not wear their seat belts.

Do you know...

Each day, about 8 people are killed and over 1,000 are injured in crashes involving distracted driving.

Take action against distraction...

- Download an app. Enable a “Do Not Disturb” app to block incoming calls or messaging while the vehicle is in motion.
- Park before eating. Before you spill anything, pull into a safe space to eat or drink.
- Hands-free isn’t risk-free. Even if the phone isn’t in your hand, there are still dangers involved when a driver doesn’t fully concentrate on the road.
- Be a good passenger. Do your best to help the driver and be an extra set of eyes on the road.
- Have a plan. Plan to silence your phone, turn it off, or put it somewhere out of reach when you’re driving.
- Have a strong, clear policy. Make it a rule: No handheld phones while driving.
- Protect yourself. A seat belt is your best defense against a distracted driver.
- Speak up. Request your driver stop driving distracted. After all, your life is in their hands.
- Change your voicemail. Notify callers that you are driving or otherwise unavailable.

DRIVE SMART Virginia will make a spokesperson available for interviews. To schedule an interview, contact Rich Jacobs at (804) 929-2988 or rich.jacobs@drivesmartva.org

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About DRIVE SMART Virginia

DRIVE SMART Virginia is a nonprofit organization charged with raising awareness and changing driver behavior in order to improve the safety of the roadways of the Commonwealth. We have endeavored to improve the lives of all Virginians through our public information and education initiatives. Founded in 1995, the organization is led by a diverse board representing safety advocates, the insurance industry and law enforcement. Our mission is advanced by fostering community partnerships, creating educational campaigns, designing and distributing educational materials, making presentations, attending outreach events, and advocating for traffic safety initiatives. Learn more about DRIVE SMART Virginia by visiting www.drivesmartva.org.