



## DRIVE SMART Virginia Newsletter

### Summer 2009

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*Dear DRIVE SMART Virginia supporters:*

*It's been a busy year for DRIVE SMART Virginia and we thank everyone for their continued support. April's Distracted Driving Awareness Day was a big success, with more than 150 partners participating. We also enjoyed our traditional spring board gathering at the Insurance Institute for Highway Safety, and had very positive feedback about our speaker, Dr. Tom Dingus, and the crash test we viewed.*

*Our next awareness event will be Virginia Cycling and Pedestrian Awareness Week during the week of September 13-20. In addition to this being an important safety awareness event, it is also an opportunity to support your employees who ride or walk the roads of Virginia, as well as an opportunity to promote health and wellness!*

*Finally, this is just a reminder that our 7th Annual Golf Tournament will be on September 25th at Hunting Hawk Golf Course. Our current sponsors include:  
GOLD: State Farm Insurance, Virginia Farm Bureau  
SILVER: Erie Insurance  
TEAM: Sinnott Nuckols and Logan  
LUNCH SPONSOR: Gentry Locke Rakes and Moore*

*As always, thank you for your help as we work to accomplish our mission of safer roadways for all Virginians. Our success is based, to a great degree, on the strength of our community partnerships, and we are very grateful. Thank you!*

*Janet Brooking, Executive Director*

*DRIVE SMART Virginia*

## Virginia Cycling & Pedestrian Awareness Week

### Please Show Your Support!

Fluctuating gas prices, concerns over the environment and the need to stay healthy and fit have changed the way people travel these days. With more and more cyclists, walkers and joggers on the roads, it's important to remember to show respect for other travelers, whether they're on 2-wheels, 4-wheels, 18-wheels or foot. For that reason, DRIVE SMART Virginia has teamed up with Bike Walk Virginia and the Virginia Highway Safety Office at DMV to kick off the first ever Virginia Cycling and Pedestrian Awareness Week September 13- 20.



It's everyone's responsibility to follow the rules of the road and this awareness week has been designed to teach people how to better share Virginia's roadways. [Email us](#) if you'd like to be added to our list of supporters and we will send you materials you can share with your employees.

## New Laws Effective July 1



### Texting and Driving

It is now against the law for any person to operate a moving motor vehicle on the highways in the Commonwealth of Virginia while using any handheld personal communications device to manually enter multiple letters or text in the device as a means of communicating with another person. It's also be unlawful to read any email or text message transmitted to the device or stored within the device, provided that this prohibition shall not apply to any name or number stored in the device nor to any caller identification information.

[Learn More](#)

### Skip School, Lose Your License

Virginia teens who miss school for ten or more days in a row without a legitimate excuse could have their driver's licenses suspended. Juvenile judges can now suspend a truant teenager's license for as long as they think is necessary, even up until the student turns 18. Kids caught driving after their license is suspended will be charged with a misdemeanor. If convicted, they'll face up to a year in jail and fines of up to \$2,500.

[Learn More](#)

## 7th Annual Golf Tournament

Friday, September 25

Hunting Hawk Golf Club  
Glen Allen, Virginia

Your participation will help provide crucial education and outreach opportunities to thousand's of teen drivers

in Virginia, as well as their parents. All proceeds will be used to develop a web-based library of traffic safety resources that will serve as a central clearinghouse for teen driving materials geared to teens and parents. [Sign up](#)



## Click It Or Ticket



Virginia has reason to celebrate! After a recent survey done by Old Dominion University, the statewide 2009 seat belt use rate has jumped to an all time high of 82.27% which is up from the 2008 rate of 80.6%!

**VIRGINIA** This puts Virginia very close to the national use rate of 83%. Programs like Click It or Ticket which is done statewide in May of each year and in selected areas at other times of the year are one of the reasons that Virginia has increased seat belt usage. The Virginia Highway Safety Office is still looking through data, but early results are giving a great idea of where future efforts will be placed. In the meantime, thanks to all who participated and continue to spread the "buckle up" message, we ARE making a difference!

*By Mary Ann Rayment, Occupant Protection/Media Coordinator with the Virginia Highway Safety Office*

## Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration Findings



### Seat Belt Use on the Rise

The FMCSA announced that safety belt use by drivers of medium- and heavy-duty commercial vehicles increased to 72 percent in 2008. That figure is up 7 percentage points from 65 percent the previous year.

Other key findings in the 2008 Seat Belt Usage Study include:

- A rise in safety belt use among passengers of commercial motor vehicles to 61 percent;

- Professional truck drivers for major regional or national fleets showed higher usage at 75 percent, versus 62 percent for owner-operators;
- Regionally, safety belt usage rates for truck drivers and their occupants were highest at 81 percent in the West compared to 77 percent in the South, 60 percent in the Midwest, and 56 percent in the Northeast;
- Safety belt usage for both drivers and occupants was higher at 80 percent in states that had primary belt use laws than 64 percent in states with secondary belt use laws; and
- Commercial motor vehicle drivers and their occupants had higher safety belt usage rates on weekend days over weekdays, higher usage rates in urban areas over suburban or rural areas, and higher usage rates in faster traffic over slower traffic

## Motor Vehicle Deaths to Children



### Most fatalities preventable

The Virginia Department of Health has found that alcohol, driver inattention and unrestrained children are among the preventable factors resulting in childhood deaths in car crashes. The report, compiled by Virginia's State Child Fatality Review Team, also found that most fatal crashes happened during the daytime hours, in clear weather conditions and dry roads. 57 percent of the children whose deaths were reviewed by the Team were not using any type of safety belt, child restraint or protective gear at the time of the fatal injury. In addition, 80 percent of all children under the age of two who were killed as pedestrians were playing in a driveway setting.

[Full report](#)

## Highway Fatalities Down

### 2009 Numbers Look Promising

Though the economy continues to suffer, there is some good news to share: traffic fatalities have been on the decline. A report recently released by the Virginia State Police

shows traffic fatalities throughout the state for 2009 are down by 16 percent when compared to the same time year. As of the end of June, a reported 345 people had died in vehicle-related accidents on Virginia's roads, compared to 412 in 2008. The nation as a whole is seeing a decline in car travel,



which many attribute to rising gas prices and the economy. Higher seat belt use and increased police patrols are also being credited for the decline.

## HERO Campaign



### More Restaurants Joining the Cause

DRIVE SMART Virginia is working with the Virginia Highway Safety Office at DMV and the Virginia Hospitality and Travel

Association to promote the HERO Campaign for Designated Drivers® in Virginia. This campaign encourages restaurants and bars to provide free non-alcoholic drinks to designated drivers. The effort was started by the family of John Elliott, a young Naval Academy graduate who was killed by a drunk driver in 2000.

Restaurant or bar owners who would like to help promote the HERO campaign are being asked to visit [our website](#) to add their names to the list of [HERO friendly establishments](#). Tent cards, posters and flyers will be available free of charge.

## Social Networking



### Do You Tweet?

DRIVE SMART Virginia has started Facebook and Twitter pages.

We have more than 175 'fans' on our [Facebook page](#), almost 200 followers on our [Twitter site](#) and are finding these resources excellent ways to interact with the public. We are posting information on traffic accidents, recent studies and reports, and interesting traffic safety news in order to educate drivers, as well as generate interest in our organization. Check us out and become a Fan!

## Upcoming Events

August 9 - 12, 2009

[Virginia Association Chiefs of Police Conference](#)

September 13 - 15, 2009

[Virginia Sheriff's Association Conference](#)

September 13 - 20

[Virginia Cycling and Pedestrian Awareness Week](#)

September 25  
[Golf Tournament](#)