



## **News Release**

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### **AAA TIDEWATER SUPPORTS DISTRACTED DRIVING AWARENESS MONTH**

VIRGINIA BEACH, Va., (April 1, 2013) – For the past few years, the Commonwealth has observed Distracted Driving Awareness Month in April. During this 30-day period, safety advocates across the Commonwealth have initiated educational campaigns on the dangers of distracted driving with the goal of saving lives on Virginia roadways, as distracted driving continues to be recognized as a top danger behind the wheel.

“Distracted driving continues to be a serious problem on our roads,” said Georjeane Blumling, Vice President of Public Affairs for AAA Tidewater Virginia. “With the number of motorists whose focus is on something other than their driving, it is apparent that people are ignoring the dangers of distracted driving.”

“We work all year to educate Virginia drivers on the dangers of distracted driving,” said Janet Brooking, Executive Director of DRIVE SMART Virginia. “During April, we work to reach local businesses, state agencies, schools, municipalities and community leaders to help us spread the word that distracted driving affects us all.” According to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA), in the U.S. in 2011, 3,331 people were killed in crashes caused by a distracted driver, a 2% increase over 2010. Take a look at these Virginia statistics.

#### **In 2012,**

- 107,240 traffic crashes in Virginia (11% decrease)
- 58,547 people were injured in crashes on Virginia roadways (7% decrease)
- 773 people died in crashes in Virginia (DMV, preliminary 1% increase)
- 80% of crashes and 65% of near crashes are caused by distracted driving

Did you know an average text takes nearly 5 seconds, which means your eyes are off the road for the entire length of a football field? Just talking on your cell phone is distracting. According to NHTSA, cell phone users are 18% slower to take action when seeing brake lights.

“Although driving seems like second nature, it’s still a skill that requires constant, complex coordination between your mind and body. Unfortunately, a moment’s lapse in attention can have tragic consequences,” stated Blumling. “We need to be accountable for our own actions to make Virginia’s roads safer. That’s why AAA is committed to educating drivers on the full range of distractions that can lead to crashes, from adjusting the radio or attending to children, to eating and drinking or using a mobile phone. All distractions place the driver, passengers and others on the road at risk.”

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Distracted driving isn't limited to your cell phone. Set your GPS before you drive away, not while you're driving. Eat in a restaurant, not in the car; and remember that kids in the back seat can also be a distraction. Avoid turning around to tend to children as much as possible. Finally, remind friends and family of the dangers of being distracted while driving.

**Top Ten Tips to Minimize Your Distracted Driving:**

1. **CHANGE YOUR WAYS** and recognize the activities that distract you, such as eating, conversing on the phone, or changing a CD. Once you recognize these distractions, you can work to eliminate them.
2. **MAKE A PLAN.** Know your route in advance and make sure that you have a good understanding of your directions. Check weather and road conditions. If you are transporting children, make sure that they are all properly buckled up and that you have items to keep them occupied, such as books on CD or soft toys.
3. **MANAGE YOUR TIME** so that you do not have to multi-task or drive aggressively on the road.
4. **DON'T LET YOUR DRIVE TIME BECOME YOUR DOWN TIME.** Understand that driving is not your "down time" or a time to catch up on phone calls, personal grooming, or dining.
5. **SCAN** the roadway to make sure that you are aware of others on the road at all times. Be prepared for the unpredictability of others.
6. **CONCENTRATE** on your driving. Make sure that you are not upset or tired when getting on the road. This is not the time to have a serious or emotional conversation with your passengers.
7. **PULL OVER** if you need to do something that will take your eyes and/or mind off the road. Make sure that you find a safe place to pull over first.
8. **REDUCE THE USE!** Use technology sensibly.
9. **TAKE A REFRESHER CLASS!** Everyone can pick up bad habits through the years. A driver improvement class can raise your awareness and help you assess your driving behaviors.
10. **BUCKLE UP, EVERY TRIP, EVERY TIME.** Making sure that everyone is properly buckled up is the best defense against distracted drivers.

*As part of North America's largest motoring and leisure travel organization, AAA Tidewater Virginia provides its more than 325,000 members with travel, insurance, financial and automotive-related services. Since its founding AAA Tidewater Virginia has been a leader and advocate for the safety and security of all travelers. For more information, visit [AAA.com](http://AAA.com) and follow us on Twitter at [Twitter.com/AAATidewaterVA](https://twitter.com/AAATidewaterVA).*

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