



News Release

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AAA ANNOUNCES FOR THE SECOND YEAR, GOVERNOR MCDONNELL DECLARES APRIL VIRGINIA'S DISTRACTED DRIVING AWARENESS MONTH

Driving Distractions can be Dangerous. Buckle Up, Phone Down.

VIRGINIA BEACH, VA (April 4, 2012) – For the past six years, the Commonwealth has observed either Distracted Driving Awareness Day, or more recently, 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.

According to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) and the Virginia Tech Transportation Institute (VTTI), nearly 80 percent of crashes and 65 percent of near-crashes involved driver inattention within three seconds of the crash. In addition, researches at the Insurance Institute for Highway Safety have found that using a cell phone increases crash risk by 4 times. Since cell phone use occurs more frequently and for longer durations, this is number one source of driver inattention behind the wheel.

“It takes just a few seconds for driver inattention to trigger a crash. We know that distracted driving is a major problem for the driving public. Once again dedicating an entire month of activities to raising awareness provides the flexibility needed for people to get involved and make a difference,” said Janet Brooking, Executive Director of DRIVE SMART Virginia. “Driving is an activity that demands ones full attention. DRIVE SMART Virginia and its more than 250 partner organizations are committed to raising awareness about distracted driving in order to help educate drivers and reduce the numbers of distracted driving crashes. We want all drivers to understand how significantly their behavior behind the wheel controls their safety and the safety of others on the road. The goal of this awareness month is to remind people of how the simplest task can become the most deadly.”

“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 Georjeane Blumling, Vice President of Public Relations for AAA Tidewater Virginia. “Drivers continue to exhibit the ‘do as I say, not as I do’ attitude – that needs to stop. 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.”

Consider the following:

- In 2010, 740 people died on the roadways of Virginia. There were more than 116,386 crashes and 61,418 people injured (DMV). Driver inattention was a leading factor in many of these crashes.
- Reaching for a moving object increases your risk for a crash by nine times.
- Driving drowsy increases your risk for a crash by five times.

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- Looking at an external object increases your risk for a crash by four times. Reading, dialing a phone or applying makeup increases your risk for a crash by three times.
- Talking on hand-held phones, eating, or reaching for a non-moving object increases your risk for a crash by one time.

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 tape 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.

For a complete list of Distracted Driving Day Partners, please visit:

<http://www.drivesmartva.org/projects/ddad.html>

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 and follow us on Twitter at [Twitter.com/AAATWnews](https://twitter.com/AAATWnews).

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