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## HEADS UP: END DISTRACTED DRIVING

### Keep your eyes on the road to protect yourself and others

RICHMOND, Va. — Distracted driving is one of the leading causes of crashes, serious injuries, and fatalities on the roads in Virginia. In fact, many drivers in the commonwealth admit to engaging in the practice while acknowledging the extreme dangers associated with it.

A poll conducted by DRIVE SMART Virginia found that 66% of Virginians admitted to driving distracted recently. At the same time, 83% consider smartphone use while driving without hands-free mode to be extremely or very dangerous.

April is Distracted Driving Awareness Month. The Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT), the Virginia Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV), Virginia State Police (VSP), and DRIVE SMART Virginia are urging motorists to keep their heads up and eyes on the road. In too many cases, motorists are engaging with their smartphone, eating or drinking, or simply not paying attention on the road. This leads to tragic consequences.

"Distracted driving is far too common these days, and it puts drivers and others on Virginia's roadways at serious risk," said VDOT Commissioner Stephen Brich. "Taking your eyes off the road to check your email or send a text message — even for a second — creates a dangerous environment. Everyone can do their part by staying focused when behind the wheel."

**"The heartbreaking thing about the statistics we see on distracted driving is that the problem is worse than the numbers show,"** said DMV Commissioner Gerald Lackey, the Governor's Highway Safety Representative. **"Distracted driving incidents are hard to report and confirm, so the lives we lost as a result of distracted driving and the crashes we attribute to distracted driving, may just be the tip of the iceberg. Please, put your phone down and keep your eyes on the road."**

"When you are driving, your number one and only focus should be on the road," said Colonel Matthew D. Hanley, Superintendent of Virginia State Police. "The law requires you to put the phone down and keep your eyes on the road. **One quick glance at a text can end a life.**"

"Every moment spent distracted behind the wheel is a risk taken with lives—our own and those around us," said Kristin Pettway, Executive Director of DRIVE SMART Virginia. "We must pledge to stay focused on the road because a single lapse in attention can have irreversible consequences. Let's all commit to driving safely, staying alert, and ultimately saving lives."

**In 2024, there were 18,688 crashes, 73 fatalities, and 10,222 injuries attributed to a distracted driver in Virginia. The top distraction type: drivers taking their eyes off the road.**

**Cell phone use, such as texting while driving, continues to be one of the leading causative factors and is one of the most visible unsafe driving behaviors. Increasingly, more people use their smartphone for directions, which can take attention away from the road. In 2024, distraction related to cellphone use rose 3% from 2023.**

Since 2021, Virginia law has prohibited drivers from holding cell phones or any other wireless communication devices while driving. Drivers can make and receive phone calls if they are able to do so without holding the device, by using technology such as Bluetooth. Violation of the law is punishable by fines. Drivers are encouraged to turn on the Do Not Disturb feature on their phone to mute calls, notifications, and other alerts to reduce phone distractions while driving.