

# Drive smart, stay safe



Motor vehicle crashes are one of the leading causes of preventable injury and death in Hampton Roads.

Whether you are a seasoned driver, a new driver, or a passenger, every choice you make on the road can make the difference between life and death. By practicing safe driving habits, you not only protect yourself, but also your family, friends, and community.

## Top safety tips for every driver

- **Always buckle up**—every seat, every trip. Seat belts are your best defense against injury or ejection in a crash. Make sure everyone in your vehicle is properly buckled before you start driving. Children under 13 should ride in the back seat whenever possible.
- **Put your phone away while driving.** Distracted driving is one of the top causes of crashes in Virginia. Activate 'Do Not Disturb While Driving' mode, mount your phone out of reach, or designate a passenger to handle calls and navigation.
- **Never drive under the influence.** Alcohol, marijuana, prescription drugs, and even over-the-counter medications can impair judgment and reaction time. Plan ahead for a sober ride or use a ride-sharing service if you plan to drink.
- **Get enough rest before driving.** Drowsy driving causes thousands of crashes every year. If you feel tired, pull over safely and rest. Switch drivers on long trips and avoid driving during late-night hours when your body is naturally drowsy.
- **Obey speed limits and adjust for conditions.** Speeding reduces your reaction time and increases the severity of crashes. Slow down in construction zones, neighborhoods, and during rain or fog.
- **Protect young passengers.** Use car seats, booster seats, and seat belts correctly every time. Follow Virginia's car seat laws and manufacturer instructions. Never place a rear-facing car seat in front of an active airbag.

## Did you know?

- In Virginia, distracted driving contributes to more than 20,000 crashes each year.
- Nearly 50% of fatal crash victims were not wearing a seat belt.
- A seat belt reduces the risk of fatal injury to front-seat passengers by 45%.
- Child safety seats, when used correctly, reduce fatal injury risk by 71% for infants and 54% for toddlers.
- Speeding was a factor in 34% of all fatal crashes in Virginia in recent years.

## What you can do today

- Take a moment before every trip to check that everyone is buckled up.
- Put your phone out of reach to avoid temptation while driving.
- Discuss safe driving habits with your teens or aging parents.
- Schedule regular vehicle maintenance to keep brakes, tires, and lights in safe condition.
- Be a role model—safe driving starts with consistent behavior every time you're behind the wheel.

## Local & national resources

- Drive Smart Virginia—Education and campaigns for safer roads: <https://www.drivesmartva.org/>
- Virginia Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV)—Safety programs and car seat laws: <https://www.dmv.virginia.gov/>
- National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA)—Vehicle recalls and safety data: <https://www.nhtsa.gov/road-safety/>
- AAA Traffic Safety—Tools and resources for drivers and families: <https://exchange.aaa.com/safety/>

Together, we can make Hampton Roads a safer place to drive. Join Sentara Norfolk General Hospital and the National Injury Prevention Day campaign in committing to responsible driving habits.

**Every trip, every seat, every time—drive smart, stay safe.**

