

## Are You Virginia's Next Traffic Fatality?

Podcast Transcript

Duration: 4:12

**Announcer (Pam Goheen):** As the Virginia Highway Safety Office, DMV is committed to saving lives on the Commonwealth's roadways. The person who leads this effort is Highway Safety Office Director John Saunders.

John, in this era of driving distractions and, often, dangerous driving behaviors, saving lives is a tall order isn't it?

**John Saunders:** It **is** a tall order. But, it's one that we are committed to. We can never be complacent when it comes to traffic safety. Each time you hear or read about a traffic fatality, I want you to pause and think --- the fatality is **not** just another number. That fatality is someone's mother, brother, friend, neighbor. There are far too many of our loved ones dying in crashes. Deaths, that for the most part, could be prevented. That's what we strive to do every day.

**Announcer:** Prevention-- key word, John. We know that people take the act of driving for granted. Drivers get in their cars, turn the ignition key and head off to their destinations, never thinking that they could be the next traffic fatality. Yet, drivers multi-task while driving, making the actual act of driving secondary.

How do we get people to understand that their behavior--- their attention to driving--- means the difference between life and death?

**John:** We all need to ask ourselves five critical questions each time we get behind the wheel.

- Question 1-- Did I remember to buckle my seat belt? Yes or no.
- Question 2-- Am I sober--- have not been using drugs or alcohol?
- Three-- Am I obeying the speed limit?
- Am I avoiding distractions-- such as cell phones or radios--- and really focusing on the task of driving?
- Am I paying attention to traffic around me--- other cars, tractor trailers, or bikes and pedestrians--- and am I responsibly sharing the road?

If you answer yes to these questions every time you drive, then you dramatically increase your chances of arriving at your destination safely.

**Announcer:** Unfortunately, there are too many Virginians who don't buckle up and drive impaired. The result is an increase in highway fatalities. How does DMV address these issues?

**John:** That's why DMV is working in partnership with VDOT, State Police and a host of other concerned and committed highway safety organizations to continue educating Virginians about these critical safety lessons.

In addition, the Virginia Highway Safety Office analyzes crash data for trends and key indicators to help us identify where we need to direct resources to make a difference. Each year, DMV awards more than 13-million dollars in federal transportation safety funds to state and local government agencies, law enforcement, and non-profit organizations.

These funds support a variety of safety efforts including high visibility enforcement activities and public awareness campaigns.

**Announcer:** How do you make sure that the funded activities are making a difference?

**John:** Each year, grant funding decisions are based on those requests that address identified safety problems and have the

greatest potential for reducing loss of life, injury and property damage that result from highway crashes.

DMV establishes measurable objectives for each of the nearly 300 grant requests awarded each fall. Future funding requests will be determined by the measurable progress toward these established performance objectives.

Our goal is to target limited resources to projects that produce the biggest impact on saving lives.

**Announcer:** This program is strategically addressing one of the most important issues in the Commonwealth today. By working with a variety of safety partners, the Virginia Highway Safety Office is reaching millions of people through enforcement and education activities. Any final thoughts, John?

**John:** Just this-- driving is a privilege, as well as a personal and shared responsibility. By being personally responsible for your safe driving practices, collectively we will save lives on Virginia's roadways.

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