



For Immediate Release
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www.harrisonburgva.gov/police

HPD Prepares for 2013 Click It or Ticket to Boost Seat Belt Use

Harrisonburg - As motorists take to the roads this Memorial Day holiday, the Harrisonburg Police Department is urging everyone to buckle up. Beginning **May 20, 2013** law enforcement officers will be out in full force, taking part in the 2013 national *Click It or Ticket* seat belt enforcement mobilization and cracking down on motorists who are not belted. This year's enforcement campaign will run until **June 2, 2013**.

"Seat belt usage is just too important to ignore," says HPD Chief Stephen Monticelli. "Our goal is to educate citizens, reduce injuries, and save lives. During this campaign we will employ extra patrol officers to enforce all traffic laws, including seat belt and child restraint use."

In Virginia, although seat belt usage has risen to around 80 percent, it's roughly 4-5 percent lower than the national average. So far this year, HPD officers have issued more than 200 citations for seat belt and child restraint violations. "We have come a long way to increase seat belt usage, but as the numbers show, we still have a ways to go in ensuring greater occupant protection," added Monticelli.

Some of the facts to consider:

-According to the U.S. Department of Transportation's National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA), **52** percent of the **21,253** passenger vehicle occupants killed in 2011 were not wearing their seat belts at the time of the crash.

In 2011, seat belts saved an estimated **11,949** lives nationwide according to NHTSA.

-Unbelted fatalities generally represent about half of all vehicle deaths on Virginia roads. The Virginia Department of Motor Vehicles reported 305 unbelted fatalities and 4,417 unbelted injuries for 2012.

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Chief Stephen P. Monticelli

-Male drivers buckle up at a rate 7 percent lower than female drivers, and that gender gap increases two-fold when it comes to buckled passengers. Men between the ages of 18-34 remain the biggest risk group, accounting for nearly 1/3 of the unrestrained fatalities in Virginia (2012).

-Drivers anticipating operating in light traffic, at slow speeds, and those operating pickup trucks showed significantly less seat belt usage overall.

"Wearing a seat belt is the single most effective way to reduce fatalities in a motor vehicle crash," says HPD Officer Greg Deeds. "As we kick-off the busy summer driving season it's important that everyone buckles up every time they go out, both day and night – no excuses," added Deeds.

Remember, May 20-June 2, 2013 - "Click-It" or Ticket.

For more on the national *Click It or Ticket* mobilization, please visit www.nhtsa.gov.