



THE VIRGIN ISLANDS POLICE DEPARTMENT

“To Protect and Serve”

Office of the Commissioner

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For Immediate Media Distribution

St. Thomas, USVI- Teens and Their Parents Urged to Buckle Up

The Virgin Islands Office of Highway Safety (VIOHS) partnered, for a third year, with EZ Driving School in support of the Teen Drivers Outreach Project – *Arrive Alive, VI*. The project, funded by a National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) grant, aims to educate, and encourage correct and consistent seat belt use by teen drivers, while empowering parents to monitor and enforce teen compliance.

This year, VIOHS’s Observational Seat Belt Survey reported a decline in an already flailing seat belt compliance rate. The VI’s 2022 rate of 67.0% indicates a low culture of roadway safety. The report identified teen drivers as one of the territory’s at-risk groups for seat belt compliance. VI Police Department Commissioner Ray A. Martinez noted, “It is fitting that we target this most inexperienced, risk-embracing driver group to encourage and support proactive safety habits. Parents play a crucial role by setting clear, enforceable expectations with their teens to reduce risk of injuries and fatalities for this high-risk population.”

The project will continue to support a robust media campaign designed for teens, by teens. The initiative also aims to empower parents of teens and tweens with realistic strategies that support safe driving practices for young drivers. “We must treat the territory’s low seat belt compliance as a community health crisis. Seat belts are proven to reduce injuries and fatalities for crash victims,” advised VIOHS Director, Daphne O’Neal. “As parents, by word and example, we must require young drivers and their passengers to buckle up. Their lives depend on it.”

Buckle up, VI! Every trip. Everyone. Every time. For more information on *Arrive Alive, VI* or to learn ways to get involved in traffic safety, contact the Virgin Islands Office of Highway Safety through Director O’Neal at daphne.oneal@vipd.vi.gov or Occupant Protection Planner/Coordinator Denise Gomes at denise.gomes@vipd.vi.gov or via telephone at (340) 473-7383.

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