

Pedestrian safety – take the pledge!



In 2009, 84 people died walking or cycling on our Virginia roadways. In addition, 607 cyclists and 1,402 pedestrians were injured. Lack of knowledge and risky behaviors often lead to crashes between roadway users. Taking time to learn the laws and safety tips can save a life, especially with area schools starting back up and many students walking, cycling and driving on the roadways. This year Drive Smart Virginia and Bike Walk Virginia are teaming up to raise awareness about roadway injuries and fatalities.

Sept. 12 – 18, 2010 is Virginia's second annual Bicyclist and Pedestrian Awareness Week. Through this effort Virginia's municipalities are being challenged to pledge to become a safety partner and distribute materials to employees and constituents.

Partners are provided with a number of resources – including posters, press releases, and sample e-mails and “tweets,” in order to communicate with constituents in a number of ways the importance of bicycle and pedestrian safety.

To sign-up, visit the Drive Smart Virginia [Web page](#) and select the “Companies, become a safety partner” link. Then, head to the [resources](#) page to find materials for your campaign.

VML Insurance Programs has taken the pledge! Will you?

A listing of members who take the pledge will be featured in next month's Pooling Matters. Meanwhile, take the pledge and share these facts and resources with your constituents.

- A bicycle is considered a vehicle in Virginia and has the same duties and rights as motor vehicles on the road, including obeying all traffic signs, signals, lights and markings.
- A bicycle should always travel in the same direction as motor vehicle traffic.
- Motorists are required by law to approach and pass bicyclists at a reasonable speed and to allow at least two feet between their vehicle and the cyclist.
- Motorists are required to use signals to notify other roadway users of intent and cyclists must do the same using hand signals. Behaving in a predictable manner while driving, biking or walking can reduce the risk of crashes.
- Whether riding in a car or on a bicycle, all safety precautions should be used, including a safety belt in a car and a helmet on a bicycle. Cyclists can also protect themselves by wearing bright clothing, using flashing lights during day and night and by securing loose clothing.
- All road users should be aware of their surroundings, including paying special attention to blind spots where other roadway users may be hidden. Also be aware of “inattention blindness,” and use extra caution when approaching road changes, entrances and exits.
- Pedestrians must travel against traffic, use sidewalks whenever available and use marked crossings whenever possible. Motorists and cyclists must yield to pedestrians in crosswalks, both marked and unmarked, when making a right turn on red, or as instructed by law enforcement or traffic control devices.

- Local ordinance determines use of sidewalks by bicycles and other alternative devices. When permitted to be on sidewalks, bicycles should yield the right-of-way to any pedestrian and give an audible signal before overtaking and passing a pedestrian.

Fact for community leaders - Only half of bicyclists say bike paths are available in the area they ride. Only 32 percent say that bike lanes are available. Half of bicyclists would like to see changes including more bike lanes and more bike paths in their communities.

For more information about motorist, bicyclist and pedestrian safety, visit www.drivesmartva.org or www.sharingtheroadinvirginia.org