



THE VIRGIN ISLANDS POLICE DEPARTMENT

“To Protect and Serve”

Office of the Commissioner

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Valentine’s Day Seat Check Raises Safety Concerns

USVI - The Virgin Islands Office of Highway Safety (VIOHS) partnered with traffic safety officers of the Virgin Islands Police Department (VIPD) and certified Child Passenger Safety Technicians (CPSTs) across the territory to conduct a pre-Valentine’s Day child safety seat check on Saturday, February 11, 2023. Data generated from the initiative sounded an alarm for child passenger safety in the territory.

As a result of this free initiative, misuse errors were identified and addressed in 80% of the seats checked on St. Thomas and 89% of those checked on St. Croix. According to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA), on the mainland, seat check error rates average 46%. These installation and usage errors commonly made by well-intentioned caregivers can cause injury to child crash victims. “Even the best safety seat on the market will not keep your child safe if it is not used correctly,” warned VIOHS Director Daphne O’Neal. “It would behoove caregivers to take full advantage of this no-cost, life-saving service.” Year round, CPSTs assist caregivers with determining the right seat for their child’s development and empowers caregivers with the skills needed to install their seat safely.

During the events, VIPD traffic officers stopped motorists, who were observed with child passengers riding at-risk to provide education on child passengers safety laws and advise the steps needed to safeguard their children. Citations were also issued to encourage compliance and to hasten corrective actions. “Our children rely on their caregivers to keep them safe,” advised VIPD Commissioner Ray A. Martinez. “Our officers will continue to conduct enforcement activities to support parents in doing right by the children in their care.” In the territory, all children under age 14 are required to ride appropriately secured in the back seat, and children under age 8 are required to sit secured in an appropriate car or booster seat.

Buckle up, VI! Every trip. Everyone. Every time. For more information on child passenger safety, to locate a CPST near you, 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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