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## LESS DAYLIGHT BRINGS INCREASES IN WASHINGTON-AREA TRAFFIC CRASHES INVOLVING PEDESTRIANS

*Law Enforcement To Step Up Efforts This Month to Ticket Violators of Traffic Laws*

WASHINGTON, D.C. – Safety experts warn that the end of daylight saving time this month will bring darker evening commuting hours and greater risks for pedestrians and bicyclists.

That’s why Washington-area transportation officials are urging all drivers, pedestrians, and bicyclists to take simple steps to exercise caution, watch out for each other, and obey traffic laws.

Against a backdrop of 75 pairs of gently worn white shoes – one for each pedestrian or bicyclist who perished last year in the Washington region – representatives from the District of Columbia, Maryland, and Virginia kicked off their annual *Street Smart* safety awareness campaign at the United Medical Center in southeast Washington, D.C., near where two pedestrians were killed last year.

Now through November 27, regional law enforcement also will be stepping up their efforts to identify and ticket drivers, pedestrians and bicyclists who break traffic laws. “Whether you’re driving, walking, or riding a bike, if you break laws designed to keep people safe, you can expect a reminder in the form of an expensive ticket,” said Chief Hank Stawinski of Prince George’s County Police Department. Violations such as failing to stop for pedestrians in crosswalks, speeding, running red lights, or jaywalking can result in fines up to \$500 and having points added to your driver record.

Nationwide, according to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA), pedestrian and bicyclist fatalities in 2015 were at their highest levels in twenty years. The agency also has reported that 72 percent of pedestrian fatalities occurred during darkness, and one in four pedestrians was killed in an incident that occurred between 6 and 9 pm.

“With daylight saving time ending this weekend, it will be dark during our evening rush hour, making visibility a critical safety issue. Like Mayor Muriel Bowser’s Vision Zero initiative, the *Street Smart* campaign reminds everyone to watch out for each other on our region’s streets,” said Leif Dormsjo, Director of the District Department of Transportation. “It’s especially important for drivers to slow down and be on the look-out for people walking and biking who are the most vulnerable to serious injuries or death in traffic crashes.”

Last year in November and December, crashes involving pedestrians in the region spiked with more than 550 incidents, 21 percent higher than average.

The *Street Smart* campaign offers common sense safety tips for all travelers (see below). To learn more about *Street Smart*, visit [BeStreetSmart.net](http://BeStreetSmart.net) and follow us on [twitter.com/COGStreetSmart](https://twitter.com/COGStreetSmart).

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*The Council of Governments is an independent, nonprofit association where area leaders address regional issues affecting the District of Columbia, suburban Maryland, and Northern Virginia.*

## **Street Smart Safety Tips**

*(BeStreetSmart.net)*

### **If you're driving . . .**

- Avoid using your cell phone while driving.
- Look twice for people in crosswalks and yield to pedestrians and bicyclists.
- Yield to pedestrians and cyclists at intersections when you're turning.
- Allow at least three feet between your vehicle and a bicycle when passing bicyclists.
- Look for cyclists and cars before you open your door if you're parked on the street.
- Slow down and obey the speed limit.

### **If you're walking . . .**

- Cross the street at the corner and use marked crosswalks when they're available.
- Wait for the "Walk" signal to cross the street.
- Before crossing look left, right, and left again.
- Be seen! If you're walking after dark or in bad weather, make it easier for drivers to see you by wearing light clothing or something reflective.
- Don't text while you're crossing the street.
- If you're on an off-street trail, obey all posted signage and approach intersections with caution.

### **If you're biking . . .**

- Obey all traffic signs and traffic lights.
- Ride in the direction of traffic, at least a car-door-width away from parked cars.
- Use hand signals so drivers, cyclists, and pedestrians know what you're going to do.
- Always wear a helmet.
- Use lights if you're riding in the dark.
- If you're on an off-street trail, obey all posted signage and approach intersections with caution.

*Laws and regulations differ between jurisdictions. Visit [BeStreetSmart.net](http://BeStreetSmart.net) for information on specific trail guidelines and regulations.*