



NEWS RELEASE

Residents urged to keep safety in mind on area streets and highways

Street Smart campaign cautions drivers, pedestrians, and bicyclists to watch out for each other in wake of coronavirus outbreak

Washington, DC (May 13, 2020) - Though recent shelter-in-place orders to defend against the spread of COVID-19 have reduced traffic and turned Washington and regional roadways into empty thoroughfares, local officials are urging area residents to keep their guard up when venturing out on area streets for food, medicine, work, and exercise.

Law enforcement reports that a growing number of drivers are taking advantage of reduced traffic to ignore speed limits and other traffic laws, while social distancing is prompting pedestrians to step into streets to maintain the recommended six-foot gap from others.

“These are tumultuous times as millions of people take measures to protect themselves and their families from COVID-19,” said Chief Hank Stawinski, Prince George’s County Police Department. “It’s important for everyone to remember that safety applies to driving, walking, and bicycling, too.”

According to the Governors Highway Safety Association, many areas are seeing an uptick in the volume of bicyclists and pedestrians outside at all times of the day as people take breaks from staying inside. Safety advocates say that it’s important for everyone to be aware of their surroundings, avoid distractions, and follow the rules of the road.

The [Street Smart](#) campaign offers these safety tips:

If you’re driving...

- Obey speed limits, even when tempted to go faster because of fewer cars on the road.
- Always come to a complete stop at red lights and stop signs.
- Watch and stop for people crossing the street.
- Avoid using your cell phone, and never text while driving.
- Be alert for people who may occasionally step into the roadway as they attempt to maintain social distancing.

If you’re walking ...

- Cross at the corner and use crosswalks when available.
- If you’re unable to use a sidewalk, keep close to the edge of the road and face traffic if possible. That way you can see cars coming.
- Use caution and double check for vehicles if you are stepping into the street for any reason.
- Avoid using your cell phone while you’re crossing the street.
- Remain alert to others around you—drivers, bicyclists, and other pedestrians.

If you’re biking . . .

- Obey signs and signals.

- Use hand signals to tell drivers what you intend to do.
- Wear a helmet.

Created in 2002, *Street Smart* is a pedestrian and bicyclist safety program that offers safety tips to drivers, pedestrians, and bicyclists through a combination of transit ads, media outreach, digital engagement, and grassroots outreach.

MORE:

Learn more about Street Smart at BeStreetSmart.net and follow the program on Twitter at [@COGStreetSmart](https://twitter.com/COGStreetSmart).

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

COG's region-wide public safety campaign. Street Smart, educates drivers, pedestrians, and bicyclists on about safe use of roadways.