



NEWSLETTER

SPRING EDITION 2019



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OPIOID DEATHS UNCHANGED THE PAST TWO YEARS



2018-2019

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Executive Director
John W. Jones

OPIOID DEATHS REMAIN HIGH DESPITE HOPE FOR DECLINE

According to the latest report on the number of opioid-related deaths in our state, fatalities remain on par with 2017, when we saw a tremendous spike. In fact, preliminary data shows the figure of 1,229 opioid overdose fatalities — the exact same number reported in 2017. The final figure is expected soon. In addition, a report by the state health commissioner has found that deaths by cocaine and methamphetamine as well as babies born addicted to drugs is on the rise.

Drug overdose remains the leading cause of unnatural death in Virginia, more than gun-related violence and traffic accidents. Fentanyl is now the state's deadliest drug.

At this moment, more information continues



to come to light about how the opioid crisis began in the U.S. There are a number of lawsuits by local and state governments across the country which claim that drugmakers, suppliers, and pharmacies made billions of dollars flooding the U.S. with a variety of prescription pain pills. Today the federal government reports that more than 130 people die each day from opioid overdoses.

Law enforcement officers in the your community and across our state are focused on fentanyl dealers given the deadly consequences of this drug.

DROWSY DRIVING JUST AS DEADLY AS DRUNK DRIVING



According to the Centers for Disease Control, driving while drowsy — feeling sleepy or fatigued — is a major problem in the U.S. This condition affects a person's ability to drive safely even if someone doesn't fall asleep. That's because driving while drowsy makes drivers less able to pay attention to the road, slows reaction

time, and affects a driver's ability to make good decisions.

The CDC indicates that the following are warning signs of drowsy driving: yawning or blinking frequently, difficulty remembering the past few miles driven, missing your exit, drifting from your lane, or hitting a rumble strip on the side of the road.

If you experience any of these signs, pull over to rest or change drivers. To prevent drowsy driving before taking the wheel, get enough sleep and avoid drinking alcohol or taking medications that make you sleepy.

STOP BY VSA'S ONLINE STORE!



At VSA's online store you will find high-quality men's and women's apparel, items for hunting, and other items that are perfect for gifts.

vsa.thepromomall.com

SCHOLARSHIP DEADLINE MAY 1ST

The scholarship — funded by generous VSI supporters like you — is granted to full-time or part-time students majoring in criminal justice and attending a Virginia state college or university.



With the help of loyal members like you, we awarded 71 scholarships for 2018-2019 to Virginia's youth.

Scholarship applications are currently available on our website at:

<https://vasheriffsinstitute.org/scholarship/>

In addition to the application, students must submit transcripts, a copy of the student's voter registration card if the student is 18, and an essay. A full list of application materials can be found on the website. Applications are due May 1, 2019.

SOCIAL SECURITY FRAUD ALERT

The Federal Trade Commission has issued a warning that scammers are calling victims claiming to be from the Social Security Administration's (SSA) and saying they will increase benefits if they are given personal account information. Other callers are receiving threats from scammers threatening to cut off benefits if they are not provided the personal information they ask for. Scammers are "spoofing" the SSA's 1-800 customer service phone number. Spoofing means that scammers can call from anywhere, but they make your Caller ID show a different number — one that looks legitimate.



Please remember, the SSA will never threaten you or promise to increase your benefits in exchange for information. If you have any doubt, hang up and call the SSA directly at 1-800-772-1213.

ASSET FORFEITURE BILL DEFEATED

The Virginia Sheriffs' Association (VSA) opposed a bill that would have effectively ended asset forfeiture statewide. The defeat of this legislation is of benefit to both rural and urban law enforcement agencies statewide.

The VSA was involved in the overwhelming passage of the decades old constitutional amendment that allows for fruits of criminal enterprise to be forfeited to assist law enforcement. Recent efforts have been made to end those forfeitures, which would have had a significant negative impact on many of Virginia's law enforcement agencies.

TIPS TO AVOID BUYING FLOOD-DAMAGED VEHICLES

While state law requires water damage to be reported on a vehicle's title, there are sellers who will ignore the law. If a vehicle is branded as non-repairable it cannot be titled in our state, but it could be titled in another state.



Sometimes water damage is not obvious; yet, water damage can create serious safety issues with a vehicle. According to the Virginia Office of the Attorney General (OAG), Virginia Code "requires insurance companies to report to DMV when they have paid a claim of \$3,500 or more on a vehicle due to water damage. Insurers are required to notify DMV of such water damage, even if the owner intends to continue driving the vehicle."

The OAG urges prospective buyers to be especially cautious when in the market for a used car following a hurricane or flood. Always inspect a car carefully looking for evidence of water, grit, and rust in the interior, undercarriage, electrical wiring system, and engine compartment. And when in doubt consider asking a mechanic to inspect the car before purchasing it.

One resource customers can use to check a vehicle's history is the National Motor Vehicle Title Information System. For more information, go to www.vehiclehistory.gov.

DRUG TAKE-BACK DAY

Virginia's next drug take-back day will take place on April 27, 2019 between 10:00am - 2:00pm. This state-wide event is an effort to prevent prescription drug abuse in our communities and to keep trace drugs out of our lakes and streams, since wastewater treatment plants cannot remove many compounds found in medications.

During the last Drug Take Back Day, held on October 27, 2018, Virginia collected more than 22,000 pounds of drugs.

Here are a few things to keep in mind if you would like to participate: 1) It's anonymous and free; 2) Prescription and over-the-counter medications will be accepted; and 3) Please do not give intravenous solutions, injectables, or needles.

For more info: www.deadiversion.usdoj.gov/drug_disposal/takeback

DOJ BAN ON BUMP-STOCK DEVICES TAKES EFFECT

The Department of Justice issued a new federal rule that bans bump-stock devices, the firearm attachment that allows a semiautomatic weapon to shoot almost as fast as a machine gun. Bump stocks are now defined as "machine guns" and therefore outlawed under existing law.

The issue of bump stocks gained national attention in 2017 after a gunman in Las Vegas used the device to kill 58 people attending a country music concert. The new regulation went into effect in March.

Gun owners in possession of bump stocks are required to either destroy the devices or turn them into the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives.

PERSONAL MESSAGE FROM VSI EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, JOHN W. JONES



On behalf of all of us at the Virginia Sheriffs' Institute, I hope you and your family are eager to welcome a return of spring and warmer weather to the Commonwealth.

Of course many Virginia residents and their families will be taking to the roadways, enjoying the change of season, and exploring all of the wonderful family-oriented events, parks,

and scenery Virginia has to offer. This time of year can also bring many out-of-state visitors to our area, so I urge drivers to be extra vigilant on our roadways.

To help you stay safe, please take a moment to read our article on the dangers of driving while drowsy. Drowsy driving can have similar effects on your body as drinking alcohol. In fact, according to the National Sleep Foundation, being awake for 18 hours straight makes you feel like you have a blood alcohol level of .05. Both driving while drowsy and drunk driving can make it difficult to make fast decisions. So please, be aware of the signs of driving while drowsy and pull off the road if you are having trouble staying alert.

Of course the goal of VSI is to provide the highest level of service to your community and to promote public safety. As always I urge you to help public safety efforts by reporting crimes and suspicious activity when you see them so that we can do our very best to keep your community a safe place to work, play, live, and raise our families.

As Executive Director of VSI, I want to know what you consider important and necessary to keep our Commonwealth safe.

I deeply appreciate your support of the Virginia Sheriffs' Institute!

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "John W. Jones". The signature is fluid and cursive.

John W. Jones, Executive Director
Virginia Sheriffs' Institute
901 East Byrd Street, Suite 1301
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INITIATIVE TO REDUCE HIGHWAY DEATHS

A new initiative has launched in Virginia to try to curb deaths related to distracted driving. In 2017, 843 people were killed on Virginia roadways and nearly 15,000 people were injured — 208 of these deaths considered distraction-related traffic fatalities. This represents an 18% increase from 2016 and has prompted the creation of an Executive Leadership Team on Highway Safety which will focus on how to stem distracted driving and will review areas like driver education, law enforcement, and possible future roadway design changes.

Under current law only texting while driving is a primary offense in Virginia; however you are permitted to hold your phone to talk while you drive. In fact, Virginia is the only state in the region that allows you to hold a phone while driving. This year Virginia lawmakers considered two bills to make any interaction with a phone while driving a primary offense. Those bills were defeated on the last day of the session.


BOATING SAFETY TIPS



The National Safe Boating Council provides these tips to stay safe while enjoying time on the water:

- Wear a life jacket and dress for the weather
- Make sure your life jacket is appropriate for your water activity and fits properly
- Know boating laws and follow navigation rules
- Take a boating safety course
- Make sure your boat is prepared and know your boat's capacity
- Check the weather
- Always file a float plan with someone you trust
- Never drink while boating
- Beware of carbon monoxide poisoning
- Be sure to have at least two communication devices that work when wet

We Want to Hear from You ...

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The VSI solicits articles and comments from associate members of the Virginia Sheriffs' Institute for inclusion in this newsletter. Articles and comments should be directed to: John W. Jones, Executive Director, Virginia Sheriffs' Institute, 901 East Byrd Street, Suite 1301, Richmond, Virginia 23219, or phone (804) 225-7152.