

The Virgin Islands Consortium

"Drive Safe: Your Load, Your Responsibility" Campaign Launched in the U.S. Virgin Islands

U.S. Virgin Islands campaign aims to enhance road safety by enforcing secure cargo transport

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The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, in partnership with the V.I. Police Department's Office of Highway Safety, and the Motor Carrier Safety Assistance Program, is urging drivers in the territory to ensure their cargo is securely contained. The safety initiative, dubbed "Drive Safe: Contain Your Cargo", aims to prevent road accidents caused by unsecured loads.

In both non-commercial and commercial vehicles, it is illegal to operate with unsecured cargo, with penalties for violations reaching up to \$5,000, according to the VIPD. Unsecured items pose significant risks on the road, potentially leading to severe injuries or even fatalities when they collide with other vehicles or pedestrians.

Daphne O'Neal, director of VIOHS, emphasized that securing cargo is not solely the responsibility of commercial vehicle drivers. "Many drivers think that only commercial vehicle drivers are responsible for securing their cargo," said O'Neal. "We want our community to know that it is every driver's responsibility to ensure their load is properly secured to their vehicle to protect other vehicles, drivers, and bystanders."

Statistics from the mainland show that from 2016 to 2020, unsecured cargo was responsible for an average of 16,878 injuries and 732 fatalities per year. Notably, 81% of these accidents involved non-commercial passenger vehicles.

To help drivers ensure their loads are safe, VIOHS offers the following tips:

- Secure cargo with ropes, netting, or straps.
- Tie large objects directly to the vehicle or trailer.
- Use a sturdy tarp or netting to cover the entire load.
- Avoid overloading the vehicle or trailer.
- Double-check the load to ensure it is secure.

June 6th is nationally observed as "Secure Your Load Day." More information on how to safely secure loads can be found on the NHTSA's website at www.nhtsa.gov. Local residents can reach out to MCSAP at 340-513-4897 on St. Croix and 340-227-0953 on St. Thomas/St. John, or contact Director Daphne O'Neal directly at daphne.oneal@vipd.vi.gov for further assistance.