

The Virgin Islands Consortium

Highway Safety Warns Improper Car Seat Use Puts VI Children at Risk

Following recent safety checks on St. Thomas and St. John where every inspected car seat showed errors, the VIPD Office of Highway Safety is urging caregivers to properly install and use child restraints as required under Virgin Islands law.

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The V.I. Police Department's Office of Highway Safety is urging drivers across the territory to take immediate, preventive steps to properly secure children in vehicles, citing recent safety checks in which every car seat inspected was found to contain installation or positioning errors that could increase the risk of injury in a crash.

In a news release issued January 15, the VIPD/Office of Highway Safety advised the motoring community that child passenger restraints are not optional under Virgin Islands law. In the territory, car seats and booster seats are required for children under age 8 or less than 4 feet 9 inches tall, as outlined in 20 VIC, §466.

The warning follows recent car seat safety check events held on St. John and St. Thomas by the Virgin Islands Office of Highway Safety. According to the office, installation and positioning mistakes “which could cause injury to a child crash victim” were identified in 100% of the seats inspected during those checks.

“The average consumer uses car seats without ever referring to the manual,” said Denise Gomes, VIOHS Occupant Protection Program Manager. “Even well-intentioned caregivers make mistakes. Our goal, as Child Passenger Safety Technicians, is to empower caregivers by providing education and supporting safe choices.”

Officials said the events were designed to help caregivers reduce risk by ensuring children are properly restrained. Participating caregivers were taught the correct way to install their car seats and how to position young passengers to reduce injury risks. The office also reported that several car seats and booster seats were provided through the initiatives to caregivers in need.

For additional information on child passenger safety, the Office of Highway Safety advised the public to contact Director O’Neal at daphne.oneal@vipd.vi.gov, or Ms. Gomes at, denise.gomes@vipd.vi.gov. The office can also be reached by telephone at (340) 712-6073 or (340) 473-7383.