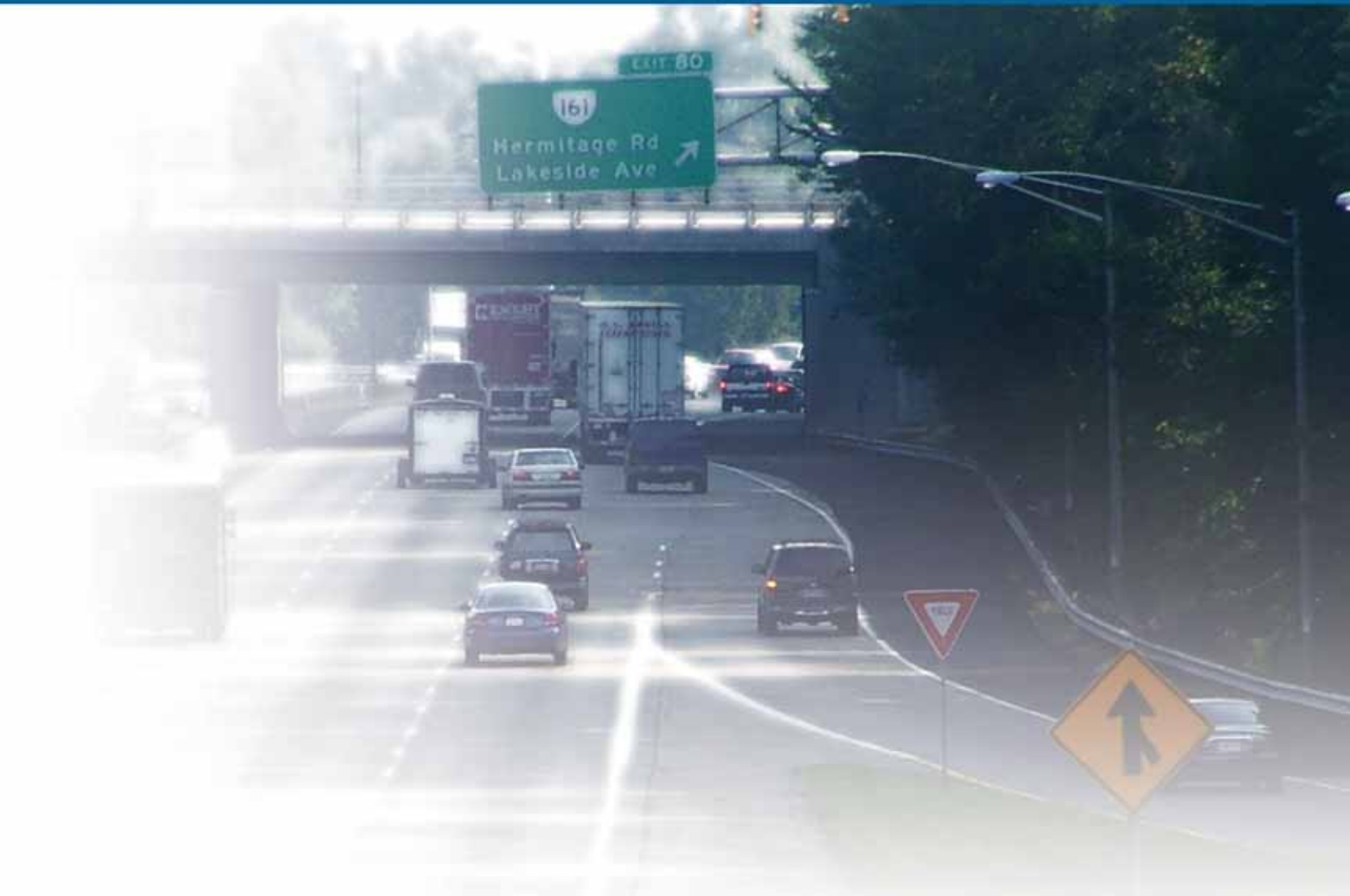




Virginia Driver's Manual



Virginia Department of Motor Vehicles



Dear New Driver,

This manual covers everything you need to know for safe driving on Virginia roads – from street signs to railroad crossings to the proper hand placement on your steering wheel.

But what you're about to read in the next few paragraphs is the most important part of this driver's manual – the actions you must take to protect your life while driving.

At the Virginia DMV Highway Safety Office, we study data to understand the driving habits that are most likely to kill Virginians. Our goal is to use this information to keep you safe. So, please continue reading and take seriously the things we've learned.

Guys – please read extra closely. **72% of all people killed in crashes in 2023 in Virginia were men.** That's nearly three-quarters of fatalities despite being slightly less than half the population according to census data. Men are driving too fast, they're driving under the influence, they're driving distracted and they're not wearing their seat belts. Women do these things too – but our data shows men do them more and the consequences are deadly.

So, please read on and take these lessons to heart. It could make all the difference in saving your life or the lives of others on the road.

HOW TO PROTECT YOUR LIFE BEHIND THE WHEEL

1. Always wear your seat belt.
 - ▶ In 2023, **54%** of vehicle occupants killed in a crash weren't wearing a seat belt. Wearing a seat belt greatly increases your chances of surviving a car crash.
2. Plan ahead for a sober ride home if you're going out drinking.
 - ▶ Drunk driving crashes are 100% preventable yet, in 2023, **293** people died in alcohol-related crashes in Virginia. Use a rideshare app, call a taxi or designate a non-drinking friend.
 - ▶ Remember, Virginia has a zero-tolerance law for underage drinking.
3. Avoid distractions when driving.
 - ▶ Always keep your eyes on the road and your hands on the wheel.
 - ▶ When reading or sending a text, your eyes are off the road for five seconds. At 55 mph, you've traveled the length of a football field essentially blindfolded.
4. Follow the posted speed limit.
 - ▶ In 2023, **449** people died in speed-related crashes in Virginia. It's important to monitor your speed and drive the speed limit.
5. Keep a safe following distance between you and the car in front of you.
 - ▶ Use the two-, three-, and four-second rule when trying to determine your space behind the vehicle in front of you. Increase your following distance when road conditions change.

So, as you start your journey toward getting your driver's license, remember to follow the rules of the road to keep yourself and others safe. By following these simple steps, you're not just looking out for yourself but also helping to reduce the number of crashes, injuries and fatalities on Virginia's roads. Safety is everyone's responsibility and, as a new driver, it's now yours too.

Safe travels,
Gerald F. Lackey, Ph.D.
DMV Commissioner

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