

THE PROSECUTOR'S PROGRESS

AN UPDATE FROM THE VIRGINIA BEACH COMMONWEALTH'S ATTORNEY'S OFFICE



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A MESSAGE FROM THE COMMONWEALTH'S ATTORNEY



With the holiday season approaching, I'd like to share some tips and reminders to help you round out 2021 safely. The holidays are a time for joy and festivities with friends and loved ones, but can also be a time for thieves to take advantage of unsuspecting victims.

First and foremost, I remind you about the dangers of impaired driving. It only takes the slightest bit of impairment from alcohol or drugs to take a life. Impaired driving is 100 % preventable! Please ensure that you celebrate the holidays safely by planning ahead and arranging a sober ride home. Also, be mindful of the heightened risk of other impaired drivers on the road.

Secondly, whether you're shopping in stores or online this year, don't let a thief catch you letting your guard down. Thieves have been known to steal packages off front porches, often during the day when homes are more likely to be empty and packages left unattended. If possible, have your online purchase delivered to a location where it can be received in person. Try to track the delivery status of your package online and meet the driver at your house or go home to retrieve your package after receiving a delivery notification. Consider sending the package to the store for pick-up if the retailer offers site-to-store shipping. If you believe you are a victim of porch pirating, first call the company where you placed your order. Also check with the delivery service to confirm delivery time and location. If your package still cannot be located, file a report with the police department.

If you shop in stores this season, stay alert and aware of what's going on around you. Park in a well-lit space as close to the store as you can. Keep your vehicle locked, and hide your shopping bags and valuables in the trunk. Don't leave your purse or wallet in your shopping cart while you're shopping. Do not carry large amounts of cash! Beware of strangers approaching you for any reason, because thieves may try to distract you in an effort to take your money or purchases.

I wish each of you a safe, healthy, and happy holiday season. Thank you for joining me in the fight to keep Virginia Beach safe!

Sincerely,
Colin Stolle

SPECIAL POINTS OF INTEREST:

- *Message from the Commonwealth's Attorney: Stay Safe this Holiday Season*
- *Virginia Beach Observes National Recovery Month, Debuts Opioid Treatment Message*
- *Consumer Corner: Cell Phone Payment App Scams*



VIRGINIA BEACH OBSERVES NATIONAL RECOVERY MONTH, DEBUTS OPIOID TREATMENT MESSAGE

In observance of National Recovery Month in September, Commonwealth's Attorney Colin D. Stolle and Police Chief Paul W. Neudigate urged those fighting an opioid addiction to seek help through The First Step Program. Data from the first quarter of 2021 shows the largest number of fatal drug overdoses ever seen in Virginia, according to the Virginia Department of Health. Law enforcement amps up its support for recovery by providing a safe place for residents in need of treatment for addiction.

A [Public Service Announcement](#) shows viewers that police precincts are safe, simple places to start a journey to recovery. When a resident arrives and asks for help with his or her addiction, police will initiate a screening by the Department of Human Services (Pathways Center) or Virginia Beach Psychiatric Center. After a free assessment, the resident may be transported (voluntarily) by police for medical detox or referred for another level of support or care.



Police do not want to arrest those experiencing opioid abuse disorder; rather, want to provide an alternative to incurring a criminal charge or suffering an overdose. While the goal of the program is to provide an alternative to criminal charges, if active warrants exist, those warrants **must** be served on individuals who appear at a police precinct. If, after being served, an individual is still open to treatment and not taken into custody, they may participate in The First Step Program.

“The First Step Program provides residents with a simple process for seeking help with addiction,” Stolle said. “The impact of mental health and substance use disorders is apparent in the criminal justice system and remains one of the greatest challenges for law enforcement and the courts. I hope that members of the community will take advantage of this partnership.”

“I recognize the need to connect people suffering from addiction with treatment and other services to address the burden of substance abuse disorders,” Neudigate said. “The Virginia Beach Police Department wants to be supportive to those seeking help, and we truly want to see these individuals receive the treatment they need, without fear of being arrested. Helping to facilitate access to such vital treatment can save lives and will be a benefit to the community.”

The Public Service Announcement, created by Virginia Beach's Multimedia Services division, will air on local television channels and online throughout the remainder of the year. Specific information about the location for treatment, Frequently Asked Questions, and resources are available on the program's [website](#). For 24/7 crisis assistance, please call the Pathways Center at (757) 385-6956 or Virginia Beach Psychiatric Center (757) 627-LIFE (5433), and you will receive a free, confidential assessment.



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**TOGETHER, WE CAN
KEEP VIRGINIA
BEACH SAFE!**

The Office of the
Commonwealth's Attorney is
dedicated to serving our
community.

To request the Office's
assistance at your community
event, please e-mail Public
Information Officer
Macie Allen at
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The Consumer Corner

Cell Phone Payment App Scams

If you have a cell phone with a payment app (such as PayPal, Venmo, CashApp, Apple Pay, etc.), be careful lending it to someone you don't know. Thieves may ask to borrow your phone in an "emergency". Instead of dialing a number, they then perform a money transfer to themselves using a payment app on your phone. To hide their criminal act from you, they will delete the money app, which will then stop any notifications you might receive about transfers from your phone.

How do you protect yourself from this scam?



- 1) Never give up your phone. If you want to be safest, don't lend your phone to someone you don't know. Remember that not all strangers have good intentions.
- 2) Dial the number requested or type the text yourself, rather than handing over your phone for a stranger to use. If the person intends to scam you, he or she will probably back out of the request for help. You can also put the call on speaker phone so that he or she may speak into the phone. This ensures you know how the phone is being used. Be sure to hold tightly to your phone in case the scammer tries to snatch it.
- 3) Secure your payment, banking, and credit card apps. The goal of these apps is often to make money transfer quick and easy. Enhancing security settings will protect your accounts.



Remember — always be aware of your surroundings and trust your instincts!