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### **FIVE FATAL TEEN CRASHES IN THREE DAYS ACROSS VIRGINIA DURING NATIONAL TEEN DRIVER SAFETY WEEK**

*Virginia State Police Reminds Young Drivers to Buckle Up and Slow Down*

RICHMOND – Despite a week-long national effort to promote safer teen driving, Virginia has still lost five young men and women to fatal traffic crashes since Saturday, Oct. 18. Each victim was between 15 and 18 years of age. Three of the five teens died on the first day of *National Teen Driver Safety Week*, which runs from Oct. 19-25. Last year in Virginia, a total of 92 teens ages 15 to 19 was killed in traffic-related crashes.\*

“It is disheartening and frustrating to see such loss of life involving our young people on Virginia’s roads at a time when they are just granted the privilege and responsibility of driving a motor vehicle,” says Colonel W. Steven Flaherty, Virginia State Police Superintendent. “It is especially difficult when those crashes could have been prevented through the use of a safety belt or obeying the posted speed limits.”

Safety belt restraints were not used in three of the fatal crashes and it is undetermined if restraints were used in a fourth. In addition, speed was a factor in two of the crashes and alcohol was a cause in one collision.

The five fatalities occurred in the counties of Amherst, Augusta, Gloucester, Lee and Loudoun. Those killed included a 15-year-old passenger, a 16-year-old driver, two 17-year-old drivers and an 18-year-old passenger.

“We want to remind young drivers that getting behind the wheel of a car is not something that should be taken lightly. Inexperience and age are already working against them on the road, so driving defensively and without distractions are necessities for all teens,” adds Colonel Flaherty.

So far this year, preliminary reports show 77 teens between 15 and 19 have been killed in traffic crashes compared to 92 in 2007. There were 50 fatal wrecks involving teen drivers in 2007; already this year, there have been 48.\*

With National Teen Driver Safety Week in progress until Oct. 25, 2008, Virginia State Police wants to remind young drivers to slow down, avoid distractions, buckle up and obey all speed limits.

\*Report provided by DMV/Virginia Highway Safety Office

#### **STATEWIDE MEDIA CONTACTS:**

VSP HQ	Richmond	Culpeper	Appomattox	Wytheville	Chesapeake	Salem/Roanoke	Fairfax
Ms. Deb Cox	Sgt. Cunningham	Sgt. Tyler	Sgt. Cooper	Sgt. Conroy	Sgt. Cotten	Sgt. Carpentieri	
(804)674-2843	(804)553-3494	(540)829-7713	(434)352-3403	(276)223-4242	(757)424-6827	(540)375-9598	(804)674-2843