Occupant Protection

Problem Identification

The Arlington County Police Department (ACPD) is committed to the reduction of property and personal injury vehicle crashes that occur within the County. The Police Department has placed occupant protection as a priority even though the Commonwealth of Virginia does not have a primary seatbelt law.

The ACPD targets our enforcement efforts based upon our Traffic Accident Reduction Program (TARP). Geographic locations that have experienced ten (10) or more accidents, two (2) years in a row, have been identified and assigned to motor officers for enhanced enforcement. The list of the locations is shared with the District Team Commanders, Patrol Commanders and the Department of Environmental Services (DES) – Transportation Engineering and Operations. The Police Department has created a Traffic Analyst position within the Systems Management Division to enhance our ability to assign personnel and assets where they will prove most effective. It is the responsibility of supervisors to assign officers to take strict enforcement action at the identified locations.

National Campaigns

In 2015, the Police Department participated in the Click It or Ticket campaigns in May and November. Pre and Post seat belt usage surveys were completed for each campaign at the same location. During each survey an officer is detailed to observed 100 vehicles and note whether the driver/occupant was wearing their seat belt. In May 2015, our Pre seat belt survey showed 80% were in compliance. The Post seat belt survey showed 85% were in compliance. The Commonwealth of Virginia seatbelt usage rate for 2015 was 80.9%.

Child Safety Seat Program

In 2007, the ACPD created a child safety seat program. A website was established to streamline the process and this created a consistent schedule.

The ACPD provides five (5) child safety seat events a month; two (2) Sunday afternoons, two (2) weekday evenings and a weekday morning. To advertise the program, handouts are provided at Civic Association meetings and posters are displayed at County libraries. Bookmarks were created and are left in the Children's section at county libraries.

During each presentation, participants are reminded of the proper use of seat belts and child safety seats. Since the inception of this program the ACPD has averaged 600-750 child safety seat inspections annually. In 2015, we held eighty (80) events and conducted 590 inspections.

The Auxiliary Police Unit's assigned vehicle is utilized to transport children when they are involved in a domestic violence incident, vehicle crash (when not injured) and any other extenuating circumstance when safe transport is needed. Through donations by the public, we have several infant and convertible safety seats for use in these instances.

Additionally, the ACPD has a “Report an Unbuckled Child” program whereby anyone can call 703-228-4057 to report the incident. Persons who have been reported to the ACPD are sent a letter advising them of child safety seat requirements and how to attend one of our events. In addition to the letter, citizens are given a multi-language instruction guide for properly seat belting children and a contact number for any questions. Citizens may also call into an unbuckled hotline number at 703-ACT SAFE (703-228-7233).

Since the program’s inception in 2007, we have served approximately 5000 residents and children. In 2015, there were three (3) Auxiliary Unit officers assigned to provide this service.

Safety Campaign Awareness

Our organized efforts are publicized through our Media Office. For each detail created, a Media Release is distributed and social media (Twitter, Facebook, Instagram and Nextdoor) is heavily used to promote our goals and forthcoming efforts. Our objective is to create redundancy in our message to continually remind the public of the dangers of not wearing their seat belt.

Data

Occupant protection data is available from our collision statistics. In reviewing our data, no discernible pattern of non-compliance with the law was detected. The usage rate in collisions was extremely high (98.1%) and in cases of non-compliance the pattern was not specific to one geographical area of the County or demographic or our residents.

Policy

The ACPD places a premium on officer safety. Chief of Police, M. Jay Farr has implemented a policy that directs officers to wear seatbelts. Officers are held accountable to this standard consistently throughout the department. When violations are observed, the incident is documented and appropriate disciplinary action is taken.

All ACPD sworn personnel receive Mandatory Emergency Vehicle Operations (MEVO) refresher every three (3) years. During this course our EVOC staff reviews our vehicle operations policy with our officers.

The Arlington County Police Department does not have specific policy the deals only with occupant protection. However, Chief of Police, M. Jay Farr has implemented traffic enforcement and police vehicle operation policies that encompass occupant protection.

Below is an excerpt of the Department Policy:

517.02 Police Vehicles

*“**General Operating Procedures –** Occupants of Department vehicles shall wear seatbelts, unless impractical.”*

Below is an excerpt of the Department Policy:

Occupant Protection

541.04 Traffic Enforcement

"It is the policy and intended purpose of the Department to reduce the frequency and severity of traffic accidents, and to promote a safe, efficient movement of vehicular and pedestrian traffic.

In these regards, the Department shall not render enforcement decisions or engineering recommendations based upon revenue generation or the pursuit of artificial statistical goals and quotas. The Department places a priority on the enforcement of speeding, ***occupancy protection*** *and the detection of impaired drivers, thus every uniformed officer of the Department shall be expected to participate in traffic enforcement activities, when appropriate, and do so without compensation or reward for the number or types of citations issued.*

Traffic Enforcement *– enforcement of traffic laws to reduce traffic collisions, their resulting injuries, and to promote the safe flow of vehicular and pedestrian traffic."*

Planning

The Special Operations Section – Traffic Safety Unit's (SOS –TSU) mission is to safeguard life and property through traffic enforcement to facilitate the safe and efficient movement of vehicle, bicycle and pedestrian traffic through and around Arlington County.

SOS – Traffic Safety Unit Goals for 2015

- *Reduce the number of property damage and personal injury accidents that occur within the County.*
- ***Regular participation in traffic safety initiatives.***
- ***Collaboration with and fostering relationships with the public, other police sections/units and other agencies.***
- ***Conduct child safety seat educational events.***
    - ***Conduct safety seat inspections.***
- *To conduct training in DUI, speed enforcement,* ***child safety seat training*** *and pedestrian/bicycle safety.*

Our goals serve as our annual guide to ensure we are continually prioritizing our resources in the most efficient and targeted manner. Supervisors are assigned to create, organize and oversee "mini-traffic safety" initiatives in addition to national and regional campaigns. Our traffic safety campaigns are prioritized in the following manner:

- School zones and school bus routes
- High Accident locations and intersections (TARP)
- Problem areas identified by citizen complaints and other means
- Problem areas identified by high volume of violations

Data captured from highway safety programs and DMV Grant funded Occupant Protection enforcement is submitted to the Commonwealth on a quarterly bases or at the conclusion of a

planned enforcement effort (such as Click It or Ticket). By submitting this data, the Virginia Highway Safety Office (VAHSO) is able to analyze our data and identify behavioral trends that assist us in directing our resources to meet the Virginia Strategic Highway Plan. Additionally, this data is reviewed to ensure our plan(s) are being effective and implemented properly.

The Special Operations Section (SOS) utilizes the "Special Event Pre-Plan" for every detail created; ranging from traffic safety programs to large scale special events (Marine Corps Marathon). This form requires supervisors to complete a thorough intelligence workup, designate specific operational instructions, designate plans for a medical emergency, determine personnel and equipment needs, make departmental notifications and list personnel assignments.

In 2015, the Police Department coordinated 80 Safety Seat Events and conducted 590 safety seat inspections. This was done in addition to the bi-annual Click It or Ticket campaigns.

Pictured above are two examples of our efforts to raise public awareness surrounding the November 2015 Click It or Ticket safety campaign.

The Department's Media Office is heavily involved in every planned detail and event coordinated by the SOS. Prior to each event or detail a Media Release is distributed to all local media outlets. Additionally, we utilize our social media (Twitter, Facebook, Instagram and Nextdoor) to ensure our message reaches a broad spectrum of our community.

Training

Child Safety Seat Program

In 2015, two (2) auxiliary police officers were recertified as technicians through NHTSA and their certification is valid through December 2018.

Recruit Officer

The ACPD is a member of the Northern Virginia Criminal Justice Training Academy (NVCJTA). As part of our recruit officer's training program they receive instruction on occupant protection, accident investigation and emergency vehicle operations. In 2015, a total of 27 (Arlington County Police) recruits received this training.

All police recruit officers receive 820 hours of training at the NVCJTA.

- 12 hours – Virginia State Code which includes DCJS requirements that require the student to identify the elements of child safety seat and seat belt violations for drivers and passengers.
- 23 hours – Accident Investigation
- 57 hours – Emergency Vehicle Operations
- 1 hour – Below 100 Program

Upon successful completion of the NVCJTA and the ACPD Field Training Officers program, officers are eligible to augment their training by attending the Advanced Accident Reconstruction course.

Mandatory Emergency Vehicle Operations (MEVO)

In 2013, the ACPD implemented a training program to reduce the number of vehicle crashes that involved police personnel. All sworn personnel are required to attend Mandatory Emergency Vehicle Operations (MEVO) refresher training every three (3) years.

In order to accomplish this cycle in an orderly, traceable and efficient manner, sworn personnel are assigned according to alphabetical order. This cycle repeats every three (3) years; 2013-2015, 2016-2018, etc.

- 2013: A-Gl
- 2014: Go-Nu
- 2015: Ob-Z

As part of this one (1) day refresher training course officers are trained on the five (5) key tenants of the Below 100 Program.

- ***Wear your seat belt***
- Wear you vest
- Watch your speed
- WIN – What's Important Now
- Remember: Complacency kills

In 2015, 76 officers participated in MEVO and received training on the Below 100 Program. Since MEVO started in 2013, 293 officers have attended.

Department Training Cycle

The Police Department relies upon a training cycle that repeats every six (6) months. Training consists of Tactical, Defensive Tactics, Vehicle Stop Tactics and Firearms blocks of instruction.

This method of training exceeds the minimum standards established by the Department of Criminal Justice Service (DCJS). Each course is vetted through the appropriate chain-of-command and approved by our Internal Affairs Section prior to submission to the NVCJTA for

in-service credit. Our officers far exceed the minimum standard of 40-hours over a 2 year period.

This redundancy permits a continual platform to instruct on department policies and procedures, local ordinances, state and federal laws.

Public Information and Education

During 2015, the ACPD took a three-pronged approach to occupant protection: public awareness, education and strict enforcement.

Public Awareness

As previously noted the ACPD incorporates a wide approach in raising public awareness through the traditional media outlets (media release) and through social media; Twitter, Facebook, and to a lesser extend the use of the Arlington County YouTube and Vimeo accounts. The Traffic Safety Unit routinely deploys variable message boards at strategic locations within the County which display safety reminders.

During the bi-annual Click It or Ticket and our “mini awareness” campaigns messages on the department’s variable message boards and social media sites remind citizens of child safety seat and seat belt usage. We advise the community of our enforcement efforts, consequences and ramifications of not “buckling up”.

- Twitter
    - Twitter is widely used by all ACPD Divisions and Sections as an effectual method of distributing public awareness and traffic safety messages.
    - Currently, the ACPD has 8,619 followers.
- Facebook
    - The ACPD Media Office continually seeks new and efficient methods of reaching our community. One of the many goals of using Facebook is to remind motorists of safe travelling practices (vehicle, bicycle and pedestrian).
    - Since joining Facebook in 2011 we have gained 5,119 likes. As the media office has become savvier, the graphics and use of Facebook have increased dramatically since 2014.
- Instagram – The ACPD Media Office launched this in December 2015. In a short amount of time we gained 165 followers.
- Nextdoor – This is a private social media site that allows the PD to disseminate information to anyone who has joined in Arlington County. In order to join, Nextdoor must verify their address. There are no followers but we are able to reach 12,450 people signed up in Arlington County.

- Variable Message Boards
    - Placed strategically around the County. Verbiage is chosen to grab the attention and remind motorists to, “Don’t Become a Statistic, Buckle Up…Click It or Ticket”.

Education

Prior to each detail officers are briefed on the objectives, goals and premise of the safety campaign. This is conducted during roll call where applicable laws are reviewed and assignments are given.

Typically, the first day of any campaign is focused on distributing flyers and posters in our targeted areas. Social media is also used to push out the same message coinciding with the “boots on the ground” efforts.

As stated earlier, the ACPD holds five (5) child safety seat programs on a monthly basis for Arlington County residents. These efforts have reached nearly 5000 residents since inception.

Strict Enforcement

Following every campaign, be it a large national campaign (Click It or Ticket) or a smaller targeted effort, our officers are directed to follow-up our education efforts with strict enforcement in our targeted areas (largely TARP data driven).

This approach has led to an extremely high rate of compliance by motorists wearing their seat belt and using child safety seats.

Enforcement

Virginia has a secondary seat belt law which, at times, makes this a challenge to aggressively enforce seat belt usage. The ACPD conducted 62 targeted operations geared toward occupant safety.

The vast majority of our traffic safety programs are centered on our Traffic Accident Reduction Program (TARP). Organized details and SOS enforcement efforts are supported by our patrol squads to enforce occupant protection violations.

In 2015, the ACPD dedicated approximately 10,000 regular duty hours directed at occupant protection. The regular duty efforts were supported by 60 hours of DMV grant funding. Personnel assigned to the Operations Division and those working in an overtime capacity issued 386 seat belt and 77 child seat summonses. SOS officers are assigned daily to our TARP locations. These officers are directed to enforce every violation of the Virginia State Code that is observed; with emphasis placed on occupant protection.

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TARP Enforcement

Seat Belt Summonses – During our targeted enforcement efforts at our TARP locations officers issued 19 summonses during our primary enforcement times (0600-1000 and 1500-1900). During nighttime hours, 1800-0600, officers issued 51 summonses and two (2) were issued at our TARP locations.

Enforcement	TARP 0600-1000	TARP 1500-1900	COUNTYWIDE 1800-0600	Total
Seat Belt Summonses issued	3	14	53	70

Child Restraint Summonses – During our targeted enforcement efforts at our TARP locations officers issued five (5) summonses during our primary enforcement times (0600-1000 and 1500-1900). During nighttime hours, 1800-0600, officers issued 39 summonses.

Enforcement	TARP 0600-1000	TARP 1500-1900	COUNTYWIDE 1800-0600	Total
Child Restraint Summonses issued	0	5	39	44

Click It or Ticket

In addition to the ”mini-traffic” safety campaigns, the ACPD participates in the Click It or Ticket campaign to conduct strict enforcement of state occupant protection laws. Officers are strongly encouraged to be proactive in identifying violations and to issue summonses, as opposed to a warning ticket, during these campaign periods.

During the two Click It or Ticket campaigns in 2015, at total of 38 seat belt and seven (7) child safety seat summonses were issued in Arlington County.

Click It or Ticket	May*	November **	Total
Seat Belt Summonses	25	13	38
Child Safety Seat Summonses	2	5	7
Total	27	18	45

**This campaign ran May 18-31, 2015. It is important to note that a total of 2,735 arrests, summonses and warnings were issued during this campaign.*

***This was a “mini campaign” that ran November 19-26, 2015. It is important to note that a total of 851 arrests, summonses and warnings were issued were made during this short campaign.*

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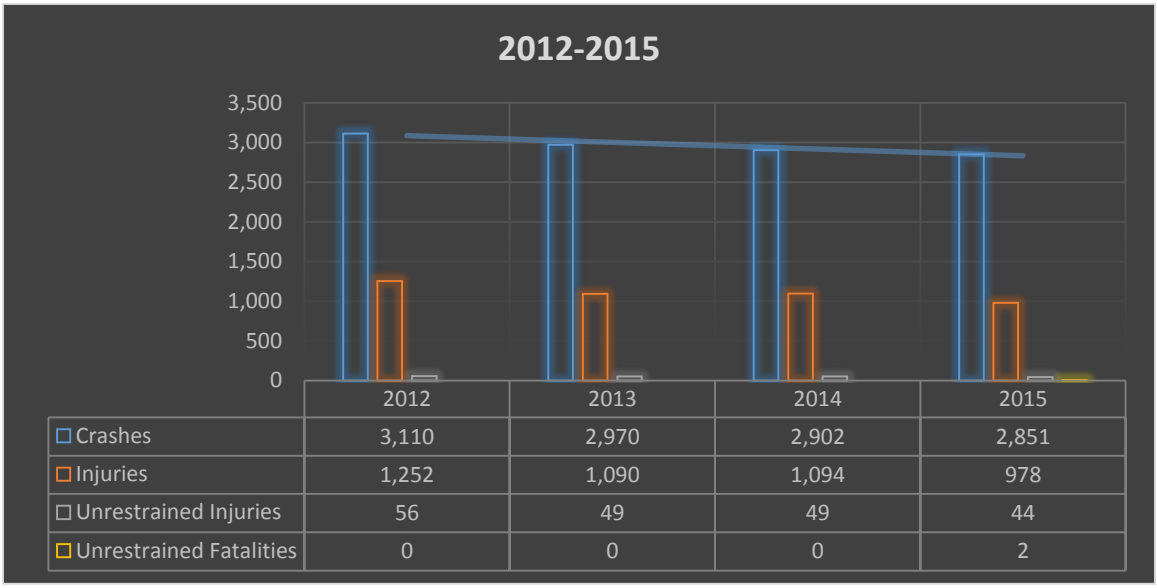
Outcomes

The Arlington County Police Department has a systematic methodology towards traffic enforcement. As previously stated we prioritize our efforts in four (4) areas: 1) School zone and bus routes, 2) TARP locations, 3) Citizen complaints and 4) High volume of violation locations. Each Section within the Operations Division are utilized to accomplish our goal of safe and efficient movement of vehicle, bicycle, and pedestrian traffic through and around Arlington County. The ACPD deploys our personnel in these areas to ensure the community observes a high police presence which is center piece of our mission; "*the reduction of the incidence of crime and the improvement in the quality of life in Arlington County by making it a place where all people can live safely and without fear.*"

In 2015 there were 2,851 reported vehicle crashes in Arlington County; 44 drivers/passengers were reported as unrestrained and 23 were injured. We had four (4) motor vehicle fatalities, two (2) impaired driving, two (2) distracted driving; two (2) were not wearing safety restraints. Of occupants killed in Virginia crashes, 53 percent were not wearing safety restraints.

The graph shown below, data from 2012-2015, depicts a continued downward trend in total crashes and injuries as a result of not being restrained. We had an increase in unrestrained fatalities from zero (0) to two (2). However, our seat belt usage rate in reported collisions was extremely high (98.1%). The ACPD TARP, community outreach and public education efforts are directly attributed to this continued decline in crashes and injuries. In 2011, TARP was created to better allocate and deploy our resources, based on current, evolving and ever changing crash data.



	2012	2013	2014	2015
Crashes	3,110	2,970	2,902	2,851
Injuries	1,252	1,090	1,094	978
Unrestrained Injuries	56	49	49	44
Unrestrained Fatalities	0	0	0	2

**Data shown above is captured through the ACPD Records Management System, TREDS (Virginia DMV data).*

During the last three (3) years, Arlington County has seen a clear downward trend in our total vehicle crashes, injuries, contributing factors and continued low fatality rate. This trend is a direct reflection of the positive impact our TARP program is having in our community; making

Arlington a safer place. Conversely, our “high crime” areas overlap with our TARP locations and we have seen a positive impact in reducing incidents of crime in these same areas.

Chief M. Jay Farr proudly accepts the May 2015 Click It or Ticket Seat Belt Award.

Awards and Recognition

Click It or Ticket Award – The ACPD earned the May 2015 “Most Improved” Click It or Ticket Seat Belt Use Award. This award recognized that Arlington County had the highest increase in seat belt use among agencies in Virginia of a similar size.

Click It or Ticket Recognition – The ACPD recognized MPO Adam Stone by nominating him for the 2015 Seat Belt Leadership Award for his efforts in leading the department in citations written during the Spring 2015 Click It or Ticket campaign. Although MPO Stone was not the winner, his efforts were appreciated by his department and the Virginia DMV.