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## FOR RELEASE ON RECEIPT

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# PCI Joins Effort to Encourage Distraction Free Driving in Virginia

RICHMOND, Va. – The Property Casualty Insurers Association of America (PCI) is joining Governor Tim Kaine, DRIVE SMART Virginia, the Virginia Highway Safety Office and the Virginia State Police in recognizing April 29 as Distracted Driving Awareness Day in Virginia.

Distracted driving is recognized as a major factor in most roadway crashes. A Virginia Tech Transportation Institute study determined that in 8 of 10 crashes and 65 percent of near-crashes, a distracted driving action occurred within three seconds of the incident.

“We recognize the need to raise awareness about the dangers of distracted driving,” says Richard Stokes, regional manager for PCI. “PCI supports measures that encourage safe driving such as the legislation recently signed by Gov. Kaine that will prohibit text messaging behind the wheel. This law takes effect on July 1, 2009.”

Driving while distracted may be described as any activity that takes one’s eyes and/or mind off of the task of driving. Common distractions behind the wheel include eating or drinking, personal grooming, cell phone use, or reading, just to mention a few activities.

Cell phone use is recognized as a major distraction. A University of Utah study shows that a person talking on a cell phone is four times more likely to get into a crash than someone driving without distraction from the phone. For someone texting when driving, the likelihood is six times higher.

Drivers can pledge to drive distraction free and find more information at [www.drivesmartva.org](http://www.drivesmartva.org). “All drivers would benefit by making the commitment to eliminate their dangerous driving habits,” said Stokes.

PCI is composed of more than 1,000 member companies, representing the broadest cross-section of insurers of any national trade association. PCI members write over \$176 billion in annual premium, 36 percent of the nation’s property/casualty insurance. Member companies write 43.8 percent of the U.S. automobile insurance market, 29.6 percent of the homeowners market, 32.8 percent of the commercial property and liability market, and 38.4 percent of the private workers compensation market.

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