

Safety/Security – August 2023:

Residents/Owners: Please share with renters and contractors – be courteous; we all live in this community.

Bottom Line Up Front:

- Mail Pilferage
- Speed Tables
- Parking
- Holes on the Beach
- School Zones and Buses
- CAC – attempted vehicle larcenies; Kia & Hyundai owner warnings

Mail Pilferage: Neighbors on Ft. Raleigh Drive reported outgoing mail pilferage from their mailboxes recently. Thieves typically sight the “outgoing mail flag” and take the contents in hopes of capturing checks that they can “wash.” Check washing uses acetone or some other solvent to erase (“wash”) legitimate entries, thereby providing the thief with a blank check that they re-write for thousands of dollars. Such crimes have increased so much nation-wide that the United States Postal Service (USPS) is actually advising against writing and mailing hard copy checks.

For situations where electronic banking is not available or the vendor (e.g., Hampton Roads Sewer District) charges more than a postage stamp (now 66¢) for electronic funds transfers (yes, I am that cheap), consider the following suggestions:

- When possible, mail bills and remittances from within the post office.
- Do not use the large blue drop box or drive-up boxes outside the Post Office because they, too, have been broken into (most recently at the Seapines Post Office at 320 33rd Street).
- If mailing items from home, place them in your mailbox in the morning, as opposed to the evening before. Daylight and people discourage thieves.
- Do not to use the outgoing mail notification flag as that telegraphs the presence of mail to thieves.
- Obtain gel pens (recommendation from anti-fraud experts is **Uniball Gel Pen**) because the ink permeates the check paper, thereby thwarting “check washing.”
- If your mail is pilfered, notify police (703-385-5000), Postal Inspectors (1-877-876-2455 or online at <https://www.uspis.com>), your bank, and the creditor(s).

Speed Tables: The City of Virginia Beach installed speed tables to slow traffic on Croatan Road after more than a decade of unsuccessful Traffic Calming efforts. Facts about the “Traffic Calming” program can be found by searching that term on <https://virginiabeach.gov>

These devices have been effective at slowing speeds but have led to traffic moving at a pace that some feel is too slow. Negotiating the speed tables represents a learning process for us all. Most SUVs, Jeeps, pick-up trucks, and large sedans can safely cross the speed tables at approximately 20 MPH. Doing so reduces accordion-type back-ups and reduces an irritant among those who oppose the speed tables regardless. Cars with rugged suspensions or front

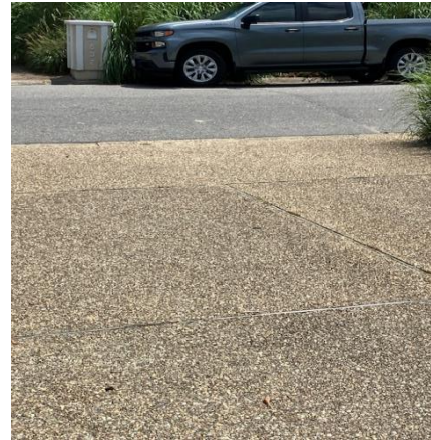
air dams can also safely negotiate the speed tables without stopping completely, however, vehicles towing trailers must cross more slowly to avoid the risk of decoupling the trailer.

Driving around the speed tables or sounding one's horn in protest are illegal and police will be on the look out for violators.

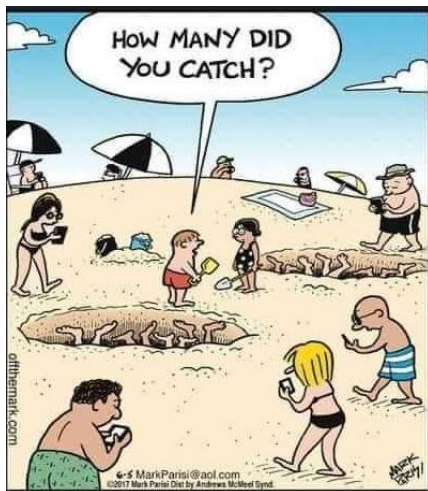
Parking: A misinformed individual decided to address his perceived paucity of parking in Croatan to *The Virginia Pilot* recently with "alternative facts" alleging that we've conspired with the city to turn Croatan into a private access beach enclave. T'ain't true!

Here are the factual facts: There is a 550-space parking lot at the south end of Vanderbilt Avenue that one may enter free of charge before 10:00 AM. After 10:00 AM, the charge is \$3 for Virginia Beach residents and \$7 for non-residents.

Although, on-street parking is limited and time controlled (9:30 AM – 7:00 PM) within two blocks of the beach, plentiful on-street parking is available west of Virginia Dare Drive (but do watch for signs identifying no parking areas on some streets). Those parking on streets are requested to respect the rights of residents and refrain from blocking driveways, mailboxes, and trash receptacles. Attached photo is an example of a "parking failure" – if postal carrier cannot readily reach the mailbox, mail will not be delivered.



The city's parking enforcement contractor does not currently have enforcement responsibilities for Croatan in its statement of work. Initial attempts to have Croatan added to the contract were shot down, but I have more rounds in the magazine and am not giving up. In the interim, police have added Vanderbilt and Surfside on-street parking to their patrol responsibilities. If you ever encounter a parked vehicle blocking your driveway or a fire hydrant, please call 3-1-1 or the police non-emergency number of 757-385-5000 and ask that the car be towed.



Holes on the Beach: If you or your dog or your kids dig a hold, **PLEASE** fill it in. Do not rely on tide or waves to do so. Humor of the attached cartoon aside, two Virginia Beach teens have died this year when holes collapsed on them and I continue to receive reports of people, often laden-down with beach gear, falling, turning ankles, and suffering other injuries when inadvertently stepping into holes. Other than discarded trash, holes remain the most prevalent beach hazard.

School Zones and Buses: Schools are opening and drivers need to tune up their situational awareness to be alert to school buses (with red flashing lights) picking up or discharging students as well as observing the speed limit changes of school zones. You must

stop for buses with red flashing red lights even if proceeding in the opposite direction of the bus when on roads without an island dividing the lanes (e.g., General Booth Blvd north of Croatan Road).

Citizen’s Advisory Committee (CAC): The quarterly Citizens Advisory Board (CAB) meeting of all four precinct CAC and VBPD Chief and Deputy Chiefs was held on Monday, August 7. Police remain concerned about the plethora of larcenies from motor vehicles. While this remains a crime of opportunity, organized gangs of thieves have been known to canvass neighborhoods and parking garages in search of unlocked vehicles or vehicles with valuables in plain sight – **including vehicles in private garages. Police need you to report all larcenies and attempted larcenies witnessed or captured on home video so they can gather evidence.** Refuse to be a victim – lock your vehicle, take or hide any valuables (especially firearms), do not leave keys to your home or fobs to other vehicles in the car as one theft can multiply into several.

At the August 9, CAC meeting, I learned that there is a Tik-Tok challenge video that instructs ne’er-do-wells how to override security systems and steal late-model **Kia** and **Hyundai** vehicles. Reportedly a **software upgrade is available free of charge** from factory dealers, but a NHTSB recall hasn’t been issued because the failure does not lead directly to accidents. If you own one of the following affected models, contact your dealer:

- Kia:**
 - Accent, 2015-2021
 - Elantra, 2015-2021
 - Kona, 2015-2021
 - Santa Fe, 2015-2021
 - Tucson, 2015-2021
 - Veloster, 2015-2018
- Hyundai:**
 - Forte, 2015-2021
 - Optima, 2015-2021
 - Optima Hybrid, 2015-2016
 - Rio, 2015-2021
 - Sedona, 2015-2021
 - Sorento, 2015-2016
 - Soul, 2015-2021
 - Sportage, 2015-2021

The next CAC meeting will be held on Wednesday, September 13 in the conference room of the Virginia Beach Volunteer Rescue Squad, Station #14 – 740 VB Blvd (17th Street) - at 7:00 PM. If attending, please park on the east side of the building. This meeting is open to all.

M. C. “Connie” Agresti,
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CCL Representative to CAC