

Know the Signs of Human Trafficking

Human trafficking often doesn't look like it's portrayed in media. Look for behaviors that lead to a feeling that something is off.

Behavioral Indicators

- Does the person appear scared, anxious, hesitant to speak, or overly submissive?
- For children, does the care giver neglect basic parenting duties like not securing a car seat, ignoring signs of distress, etc.?

Control and Dependency

- Does the person lack personal belongings or identification?
- Is someone else in possession of their ID, passport, or important documents?
- Are they with a controlling companion or nervous around law enforcement?
- Are multiple individuals seemingly under the control of one person?

Physical Appearance and Condition

- Are there signs of physical abuse (bruises, injuries) or neglect (poor hygiene, dirty clothes, malnutrition)?
- Do they appear disheveled, overly tired, or dressed inappropriately for the weather?
- Do they appear to be under the influence of a substance, potentially as a means of control?

For more information visit:

Highway Heroes

<https://www.vtti.vt.edu/highway-heroes/>



How to Respond

**FOR RAPID
RESPONSE
& ACTION**

**Call
911**

Be a Good Witness

Take note and report:

- ➔ **Precise Location:** Highway, exits, mile markers, crossroads and landmarks
- ➔ **Details:** Who is involved, gender, age, height, hair color/type, features etc.
- ➔ **Vehicle Details:** Make, model, color, license plate

**SEE SOMETHING?
SAY SOMETHING!**

**TRUST
YOUR
INSTINCTS!**

**DO NOT
APPROACH
THE
TRAFFICKER
OR VICTIM.**

**After calling 911
Submit a tip to the**

**NATIONAL
HUMAN
TRAFFICKING
HOTLINE**

**Call:
1-888-373-7888
Text:
BeFree (233733)**

Be a Highway Hero!

**Help Stop
Human Trafficking**



Highway Heroes provides information and free resources to educate and empower the trucking community and the public to identify and report potential human trafficking situations.

"Together, we can drive change on the highways."

**VIRGINIA TECH
TRANSPORTATION INSTITUTE**





Current Trends in Human Trafficking

Human trafficking is a global crime in which people are bought and sold for forced labor or commercial sex.

■ Digital Platforms and Social Media

Traffickers target victims and connect with buyers anonymously. Social media has also become a tool for recruitment, especially among minors and other vulnerable populations. Communication and recruitment through illicit message boards and gaming are also trending.

■ Sextortion

Recruitment often involves threatens to distribute private and sensitive material if the victim doesn't provide images of a sexual nature, sexual favors, or money.

■ Remote Trafficking

Control from across state lines and cashless transactions (cash apps, Venmo, etc.) are common.

■ Familial Trafficking

90% of commercial child sexual exploitation starts in the victim's own home. Over 1/3 of trafficking survivors experienced familial trafficking.

■ Illicit Massage Parlors

Disguised as legitimate businesses, this type of crime can be difficult to identify. Covered windows, restricted access, late or extended hours, and signs that workers are living or sleeping at their workplace may be indicators of human trafficking.

■ Large Scale Events

Human trafficking activity spikes around events such as sports and political events.



Types of Human Trafficking

Traffickers identify and leverage their victims' vulnerabilities to create dependency.

Sex Trafficking

Victims are coerced into commercial sex acts. Truck and rest stops, hotels, and illicit massage parlors are high-risk areas for sex trafficking and where drivers may see signs of trafficking activity, see victims, or be solicited to participate.

Labor Trafficking

Victims are forced to work through threats, deception, or debt, often in agriculture, construction, or domestic work. Watch for signs of coercion at job sites or delivery locations.

Familial Trafficking

Family members exploit relatives, often children, for sex or labor in exchange for money, drugs, or favors. Look for unusual family behavior at rest stops, motels, and city centers.

Survivor support and resources are often lacking, making escape difficult for victims. It can also cause them to re-enter trafficking activity. Victim resources and more information can be found at:

<https://www.vtti.vt.edu/highway-heroes/victim-resources.html>



Who Are the Victims?

People of all ages, genders, races, backgrounds, and localities can be victims of human trafficking.

Vulnerable Targets Include

- People who face social, economic, and political disadvantages due to race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, disability, or economic status
- Runaway and homeless youth
- LGBTQ individuals and young males are increasingly targeted
- Migrants or people who have recently relocated
- People with a history of substance use or mental health concerns

Traffickers use violence, manipulation, and coercion, to lure, control, and exploit their victims.

There are an estimated 50 million victims worldwide, of which 12 million are children.

Human trafficking generates \$236 billion in illicit profits annually, second only to drug trafficking as the world's largest criminal enterprise.

