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SECRETARY OF STATE

NEWS

ILLINOIS SECRETARY OF STATE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

- **December 7, 2001**
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White Urges Motorists to Celebrate the Holiday Season Safely

SPRINGFIELD — Illinois Secretary of State Jesse White encourages people to celebrate safely and use designated drivers during this holiday season as December marks National Drunk and Drugged Driving Prevention Month.

"This is the time of year when we gather with family and friends and give gifts to show them how much they mean to us," White said. "By not drinking and driving, we are giving a gift we all can enjoy for a very long time."

Last year from Christmas to New Year's, there were 19 traffic fatalities in Illinois; eight of them were alcohol-related. In 1999, the total number of traffic deaths was 37, eight of which were alcohol-related.

The Secretary of State's office is working with Mothers Against Drunk Driving (MADD) to distribute red ribbons for the "Tie One on for Safety" program, which encourages drivers to tie a red ribbon on their car as a sign that they are safe and sober drivers. Ribbons are available at White's 138 driver's license facilities across the state.

White's office also has prepared a special holiday flyer called "Celebrate Safely" with information on impaired driving and advice on how to be safe during the holiday season.

"Alcohol and gasoline are a dangerous combination," White said. "Think before you drink and if you drink too much, call a cab or stay where you are. Don't risk your life or endanger the lives of others."

Secretary White also reminds drivers that they will face

harsher penalties if they do drink and drive because of legislation passed by the General Assembly this July. The new legislation targets the most dangerous drivers and repeat offenders by increasing jail time and immobilizing offender's automobiles.

National Drunk and Drugged Driving Prevention Month is coordinated by the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration and its focus is to prevent crashes through awareness.