



# Jesse White

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## SECRETARY OF STATE

# NEWS

ILLINOIS SECRETARY OF STATE

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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### **Secretary White Notes Increase in Alcohol-Related Crashes for December 2002**

*Urges Motorists to Celebrate This Year Safely*

**CHICAGO** — Illinois Secretary of State Jesse White alerted motorists that the number of alcohol-related fatalities has increased from the previous December and he is encouraging people to celebrate safely and use designated drivers.

- In December of 2002, there were 126 crash fatalities, 47 of which were alcohol-related. The year before there were 109 fatalities, 36 of which were alcohol-related.

"This is the time of year when we attend parties and gather with family, friends and co-workers to celebrate the season," White said. "Let's make sure our festivities stay festive. Celebrate safely, designate a sober driver or take a cab, bus or train."

December is National Drunk and Drugged Driving Prevention Month, an effort coordinated by the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, which focuses on prevention of crashes through awareness.

"Awareness is the only way we will be able to bring the number of crashes down, because drivers will think twice before they drink and drive and either stay where they are or use another form of transportation," White said.

- Last year over the Christmas holiday, 50 percent of the traffic fatalities were alcohol related compared to the previous year when 37 percent were alcohol related.

In addition, White'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 cars as a sign that they are safe and sober drivers. Those ribbons are available at driver's

license facilities across the state.

White said that Secretary of State police will be participating in DUI and seatbelt patrols during the holiday season.

- Over 50,000 drivers were arrested in 2002 for DUI, White said.

White reminded drivers that the safety belt is the best defense against a drunk driver. This year the governor and legislature passed the primary seat belt law allowing law enforcement officers to stop and ticket motorists who are not properly belted in.

- Lap and shoulder belts reduce the risk of fatal injury by 45 percent.