

**For Immediate Release:**  
March 31, 2015

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**Jesse White Reminds Drivers to Drive Safely; Avoid Distracted Driving**  
*April is National Distracted Driving Awareness Month*

Illinois Secretary of State Jesse White is reminding people to travel safely and avoid driving while distracted. April is National Distracted Driving Awareness Month.

“As travel increases with the warming weather, I encourage everyone to put away their cell phones while they are behind the wheel and focus on the task at hand: driving safely,” said White. “Studies show that distracted driving contributes significantly to otherwise preventable fatal crashes.”

A recent study funded by the AAA Foundation for Traffic Safety and conducted by the University of Iowa showed that distractions played a role in nearly 60 percent of crashes involving teens. Distracted driving contributes to more than 5,000 traffic fatalities each year, according to the foundation.

Texting while driving is perhaps the most dangerous form of distracted driving. According to NHTSA, driving while texting is six times more dangerous than drunk driving. And texting drivers are 23 times more likely to be involved in a crash than drivers not texting.

Illinois has been a national leader in efforts to combat distracted driving. White chaired the state’s Distracted Driving Task Force, which led to the state’s ban on texting while driving in 2010. Over 5,000 people were convicted of texting while driving after that law took effect Jan 1, 2010.

On Jan. 1, 2014, the new state law banning handheld cell phones while driving took effect. In the law’s first year, more than 37,000 drivers were convicted for texting, talking or dialing on a handheld cell phone.

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