
The Belleville Beat

Belleville Police Department
Belleville, IL 62220

November 2005
Volume 11, Number 11

From the Desk of Sgt. Don Sax

For November 2005 *The Belleville Beat* welcomes Secretary of State Jesse White.

A Message from Secretary of State Jesse White

Dear Illinois Motorist:

The number of fatal automobile crashes in Illinois has climbed dramatically. Many of these crashes are caused in part by drivers distracted by everything from their cell phones and radios to their kids in the back seat.

The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration reports that 10 percent of all fatal crashes are partially caused by drivers who weren't paying attention. Nearly a quarter of all crashes—both fatal and nonfatal—were caused in part by distracted drivers.

As Secretary of State, one of my top priorities is to create a safer driving environment for Illinois' motoring public. The first step toward reducing the number of distracted drivers on Illinois roads each year is to increase public awareness about the importance of giving your full attention to the road. This brochure provides facts related to distracted driving and how you can reduce your risk of causing a crash due to driving distractions. Please share this information with others. Remember, always drive defensively.

Sincerely,
JESSE WHITE
Secretary of State

Driver distractions and inattentive driving play a part in one out of every four motor vehicle crashes. That's more than 1.5 million collisions a year —more than 4,300 crashes each day!

Distracted driving is a major factor in many traffic crashes...Pay attention, or pay the price.

Inattention Fuels Most Crashes

- Failing to pay attention when driving is a growing problem and a leading cause of motor vehicle crashes.
- Many crashes are caused by actions as simple as tuning the radio or as innocent as glancing at a dog on the sidewalk. Carelessness or inattention—even for a second to change the radio station—causes more crashes than anything else.
- A report by the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration indicates that inattention causes 68 percent of rear-end crashes. Other kinds of crashes—backing up, lane changes and merging—are usually caused by a driver not recognizing an obstacle or not paying attention.

When driving do you ever...

- Tune the radio
- Eat, drink or smoke
- Pick something up from the floor or between the seats
- Write, read
- Reach for the glove compartment
- Talk on the cell phone
- Clean the inside of the windshield
- Argue with another passenger
- Comb or brush your hair
- Break up fights between your kids
- Put on makeup
- Put on contact lenses or use eye drops
- Shave
- File, clip or polish your nails

If you answered yes to any of the above, you are driving while distracted and are at risk for a crash. Drivers inadvertently sometimes focus their attention away from the roadway, putting themselves and their families/passengers in jeopardy.

How To Avoid Being Distracted – Stay focused, Pay attention

Limit interaction with passengers

- Avoid talking while driving
- Avoid taking your eyes off the road
- Keep both hands on the wheel

Avoid driver fatigue

- Stay focused on the road
- Don't daydream
- Don't drive if you are tired
- Share driving responsibilities on long trips

Don't drive when angry or upset

- Emotions can interfere with safe driving. Wait until you have cooled down or resolved problems to drive.

Avoid "gawking"

- Avoid slowing down to look at a crash or other activity

If you need to use your cell phone when driving

- Pull off the road and stop in a safe place before using your phone.

Using a cell phone while driving increases your chance of getting into a crash by 400 percent. When dialing a phone number or engaging in intense conversation, you are not watching the road like you should. A "hands-free" apparatus is helpful, but it can't prevent you from becoming involved in a conversation and losing concentration.

Your best defense is to pull off the road and stop in a safe place before using your phone.

New Changes to Teen Driving Laws

Effective July 15, 2005, PA 94-0240 Prohibits the use of cell phones for drivers under the age of 18, unless it is for emergency purposes.

Effective January 1, 2006, PA 94-0241 Each driver under the age of 18 years and each of the driver's passengers under the age or 19 years (changed from 18) shall wear a safety belt.