



State of Illinois
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Summit spotlights distracted driving dangers, looks to develop solutions to traffic safety issues

Latest IDOT effort to help bring down rising death totals on state roads

SPRINGFIELD —The Illinois Department of Transportation today convened its first “Traffic Safety Summit: Partnering Toward Zero Deaths” to bring together local and state agencies, public officials and community members to seek solutions to distracted driving and develop new ways to increase safety and awareness on Illinois roads.

“The number of lives lost each year due to crashes is nothing short of an epidemic,” said Illinois Transportation Secretary Randy Blankenhorn. “No one group can tackle this alone, which is why it was important to bring everyone together to discuss a multifaceted approach to this complex issue. This summit is just the beginning of what needs to be a statewide conversation on how to save lives.”

Texting and driving — and other forms of distracted driving — is a growing public safety hazard, suspected of contributing to the increasing number of traffic deaths in Illinois. The last two years, traffic deaths in Illinois surpassed 1,000, the highest in a decade and mirroring national trends.

“One of my top traffic safety priorities is combating distracted driving — especially texting while driving,” said Secretary of State Jesse White. “This is why last week I unveiled a new distracted driving video that was written, produced and features high school students. The video is being distributed to high schools statewide to help address the dangers of distracted driving and is yet another effort by my office to educate the public on the dangers of distracted driving. I applaud IDOT for hosting this Traffic Safety Summit. Working together, we can save lives.”

In addition to speakers from IDOT, other participants included: a distracted driving community advocate, traffic safety engineers, educators, first responders and other law enforcement. The Minnesota Department of Transportation led a presentation on its successful Toward Zero Deaths initiatives. Additionally, multidisciplinary work groups came together to delve further into the issue.

“Crashes remain a leading cause of injury and death in the United States,” said Illinois Department of Public Health Director Nirav D. Shah. “Preventing motor vehicle deaths and injuries will take a proactive approach that involves bringing together multiple stakeholders – law enforcement, transportation experts, advocacy groups and public health. Working together we can continue to reduce the number of deaths and injuries caused by vehicle crashes each year.”

The summit, available to be viewed by clicking [here](#), is the latest effort by IDOT to improve traffic safety and awareness across the state. Other initiatives include: crashed cars displayed at rest areas this summer as a physical reminder of the importance of responsible driving, [a dynamic message sign contest](#) encouraging people to submit their own safety messages and continued development of new ways to improve safety in work zones.

Earlier this year, IDOT launched Life or Death Illinois, a multimedia campaign that includes vivid imagery and key statistics to underline the importance of safe driving and appeals to audiences to consider the seriousness of the issues on the state’s roads. Visit lifeordeathillinois.com for more information.

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