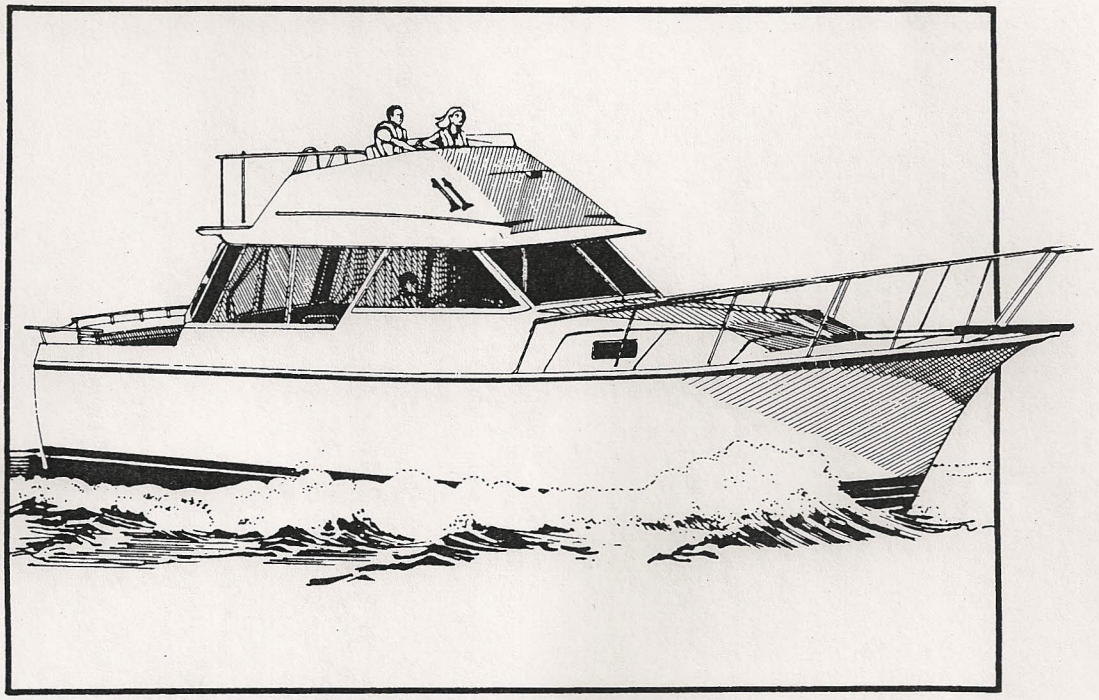
ILLINOIS DEPARTMENT OF CONSERVATION
OFFICE OF LAW ENFORCEMENT

BOATING ACCIDENT REPORT

January 1, 1992 - December 31, 1992



Illinois
Department of
Conservation
life and land together

The number of reported boating accidents dropped slightly from 179 in 1991 to 147 in 1992. In 1991, the number of accidents reported in Illinois was considered to be disturbingly high. National statistics indicated a general reduction in the numbers of accidents in 1991 over 1990, while Illinois accidents increased by 82%. The reduction for 1992 is somewhat encouraging.

There were 28 fatalities reported in 1992. All 28 were preventable had the boaters exercised a reasonable amount of caution and responsibility. Fifteen of the victims would almost surely be alive today if they had worn a PFD (Personal Floatation Device). Several other fatalities and many injuries involved the irresponsible consumption of alcohol.

According to nationwide figures released by the U.S. Coast Guard, alcohol continues to be a major contributing factor to boat accidents. These statistics show that if one consumes alcohol while boating they should remember these important facts:

- alcohol is a depressant that slows brain and spinal cord activity even when consumed in relatively small amounts;

- after even one drink, the possibility of an operator being involved in a boating accident increases threefold;

- of the 1,200 Americans who die in boating accidents every year, 90% drown;

- over 50% of boating accident drownings involve alcohol.

An intoxicated person not wearing a PFD faces a much greater chance of drowning. State law requires that each person on board a watercraft have an approved PFD accessible to them, however, wearing a PFD is the wisest safety precaution that can be taken.

A person is considered legally intoxicated in the State of Illinois if their Blood Alcohol Concentration (BAC) reaches or exceeds .10%. Alcohol concentration refers to the grams of alcohol per 100 milliliters of blood or per 210 liters of breath. .10% BAC is considered legally intoxicated. When considered with other evidence, a charge of operating under the influence of alcohol may be charged with as little as .05%.

Since Blood Alcohol Content is referenced in this report, the following information will help explain what various percentages mean:

BAC to .05%	*Be careful!* Loss of judgement, coordination decreased, dulled thinking, mood and behavior changes.
BAC .05% to. 09%	*Operating ability impaired!* Walking, speech, and hand movements are clumsy. Blurred, split or tunnel vision may occur. Judgement and boat operating ability impaired. Greatly increased chance of accident!
BAC .10% and over	*Do not operate a boat!* Inhibitions and judgement seriously affected. Responses slowed and dull. Behavior greatly affected. <u>High risk of accident</u>.

Appoint a designated operator who will agree not to drink alcohol at all! Don't take chances with your life or the lives of friends and family.

The Illinois Department of Conservation, Office of Law Enforcement is continually training officers in improved boat accident investigation techniques. Nationwide, the Department supports the National Association of Boating Law Administrators and the U.S. Coast Guard. Their work in compiling accident statistics for legislation, enforcement and continuing education can be directed toward the most common cause of accidents. Through increased emphasis on education, Operation Under the Influence (OUI) enforcement, and improved accident investigations, the Illinois Department of Conservation hopes to see a continued reduction in the number of serious accidents and fatalities in 1993 and years to come.

Deputy Chief Tom Wakolbinger
Illinois Department of Conservation
Office of Law Enforcement

STATE OF ILLINOIS

BOATING ACCIDENT REPORT

From January 1992 to December 1992

Total Accidents	- 147	PROPERTY DAMAGE (total of	
Injuries	- 124	all vessels involved)	
# of Drownings	- 20	Total $ Amount	$262,240
# of Deaths from injuries	- 08	Average $ Amount	2,132

Number of Registered Boats - Approximately 365,000

TIME & PLACE

MONTH

January - 02	April - 08	July - 44	October - 03
February - 00	May - 25	August - 29	November - 00
March - 03	June - 23	September - 09	December - 01
			TOTAL -147

DAY

Monday - 10	Wednesday - 08	Friday - 17	Sunday - 54
Tuesday - 10	Thursday - 10	Saturday - 38	TOTAL -147

COUNTY

Adams - 01	Jefferson - 01	McHenry - 07
Bond - 01	Jersey - 02	Menard - 01
Bureau - 01	JoDaviess - 04	Morgan - 01
Calhoun - 03	Kane - 01	Peoria - 02
Clark - 01	Kankakee - 03	Randolph - 02
Clinton - 03	Knox - 01	Rock Island - 08
Coles - 02	Lake - 17	Sangamon - 02
Cook - 19	LaSalle - 08	Schuyler - 01
DeWitt - 04	Lawrence - 01	Scott - 02
Effingham - 01	Livingston - 02	Shelby - 02
Franklin - 02	Macon - 04	St. Clair - 04
Greene - 01	Macoupin - 01	Tazewell - 03
Grundy - 08	Madison - 02	Whiteside - 01
Henderson - 01	Marshall - 01	Will - 08
Jackson - 01	Mason - 02	Winnebago - 04
		TOTAL -147

TIME

Midnight - 6:00 am	- 11
6:01 - 12 Noon	- 16
12:01 - 6:00 pm	- 81
6:01 - Midnight	- 38
TOTAL	-147

TYPE OF ACCIDENT

Grounding	- 05	Coll. with Float Obj.	- 09
Capsizing	- 16	Falls Overboard	- 05
Flooding	- 01	Falls in Boat	- 01
Sinking	- 10	Burns	- 00
Fire or Expl. (fuel)	- 04	Hit by Boat/Propeller	- 12
Fire or Expl. (other)	- 01	Other	- 20
Coll. with Vessel	- 44	Unknown	- 00
Coll. with Fixed Obj.	- 19	Total	-147

BODY OF WATER

Bangs Lake	- 01	Lake Holiday	- 01
Beaver Dam Lake	- 01	Lake Jacksonville	- 01
Braidwood Lake	- 01	Lake Kincaid	- 01
Calumet River	- 01	Lake Marie	- 02
Calumet Sag Channel	- 04	Lake Michigan	- 14
Carlyle Lake	- 03	Lake Sara	- 01
Chgo Ship/San Canal	- 01	Lake Shelbyville	- 02
Chicago River	- 03	Lake Springfield	- 02
Clinton Lake	- 04	LaSalle Lake	- 01
College Pond	- 01	Lincoln Lake	- 01
Cross Lake	- 01	Long Lake	- 02
Des Plaines River	- 03	Mississippi River	- 17
Farm Pond	- 02	Nippersink Lake	- 01
Fox Lake	- 04	Pistakee Bay	- 01
Fox River	- 08	Private Club Lake	- 02
Governor Bond Lake	- 01	Rend Lake	- 02
Grass Lake	- 01	Residential Lake	- 01
Holiday Shores Lake	- 01	Rock River	- 04
Illinois River	- 26	Shannon Shores	- 01
Kankakee River	- 07	Siloam Springs Lake	- 01
Kaskaskia River	- 06	Spoon River	- 01
Lake Charleston	- 01	Vermilion River	- 02
Lake Decatur	- 04	Wabash River	- 01
		TOTAL	-147

AGE	Less than 20 hours	20 to 100 hours	100 to 500 hours	Over 500 hours	Unknown	Total
Teenage	08	03	02	00	03	16
20 - 29	11	23	19	13	02	68
30 - 39	06	11	17	13	02	49
40 - 49	05	06	11	16	01	39
50 - 59	00	02	03	08	01	15
60 - 69	01	00	03	03	00	07
70 -Over	00	00	00	03	02	05
Unknown	00	00	00	01	00	01
TOTAL	31	45	55	57	12	200

17 or Younger 8 With Instructions 7 Without Instructions 1

NARRATIVES FOR 1992 FATAL BOATING ACCIDENTS

1. NARRATIVE: The operator/victim of this accident had built an air boat and launched it for a test run. The operator headed across the river attempting to bring the boat on plane at full throttle. The boat failed to plane and improper propeller pitch forced the bow of the boat downward. The weight of the water in the bow forced the boat to tilt to the port side and the flat bottom designed craft was unable to stabilize in the cross-current. The operator shut down the engine as the boat capsized in the strong current. The boat rotated in a counterclockwise motion and sank approximately 150 - 175 yards from shore. The operator swam clear as the craft sank in 8 - 10 feet of water. He continued to swim mid-stream as witnesses followed him along the shoreline. He swam approximately 200 yards down stream yelling "Get help! I'm in trouble." A short time thereafter he disappeared below the surface of the water. The victim was not wearing a life jacket.

   Cause of Accident: Capsizing, improper hull design
   Contributing Factors: Not wearing a PFD

2. NARRATIVE: The victim had slept aboard his boat which was tied to a dock. At approximately 5:00 a.m. neighbors heard the victim yelling for help and spotted him in the water trying to reach the dock. His boat was in flames. The victim received 3rd degree burns to his abdomen, chest, arms and neck and was transported to the hospital in critical condition. He later died from the burn injuries. Investigation determined that the fire started in the galley area but did not uncover the cause of the fire.

   Cause of Accident: Fire aboard craft
   Contributing Factors: Undetermined

3. NARRATIVE: An attempt to "shoot the spillway" resulted in the drowning death of a 21-year-old man. The victim was observed paddling purposefully towards a river spillway in an inflatable one-man rubber raft. After the raft went over the spillway it became caught in the turbulence at the river level. The victim attempted to paddle to the bank of the spillway but appeared to panic as he encountered increased turbulence and jumped from the raft. The victim surfaced three times then disappeared, he was not wearing a life jacket.

   Cause of Accident: Hazardous waters
   Contributing Factors: Lack of good judgement, no PFD

4. NARRATIVE: Three men were fishing from an 18-foot flat bottom boat upstream from a lock and dam. The motor died and the operator tried to restart it with no luck. The men attempted to paddle the boat but the current was too strong and pulled them towards the lock and dam. One man threw out an anchor but the line broke. Another anchor was thrown but the line was too short for the depth of the water and it would not hold. One man jumped and made it to shore while the other two stayed with the boat which went through the dam. The victim died from head and chest injuries believed to have been caused by the boat smashing against him when it went through the dam. The other two passengers were in good condition. All three men were wearing life jackets.

Cause of Accident: Equipment failure
Contributing Factors: Too close to dam

5. NARRATIVE: A boat owner along with a friend took his boat out for a test drive prior to taking it on trip. The owner was traveling at high speed when the boat made a sudden violent turn causing both men to be thrown from the craft. The boat began making circles at a fast speed and as it circled around the men they were forced to dive under water several times to avoid being hit. The operator began swimming towards shore and was fatally struck by the boat. The boat continued circling for 45 minutes until it ran out of fuel. The operator had a kill switch cord attached to the motor, but did not have it attached to himself.

   Cause of Accident: Excessive speed, possible fault of equipment
   Contributing Factors: Careless operation, lanyard not used

6. NARRATIVE: Five college students attempted to rent a 16-foot jon boat from a marina. The marina operator refused to rent the boat to all five of them, only three. The five subjects agreed that three would go out in the boat and the other two would fish from the bank. The marina operator gave them three life jackets and three throwable (Type IV PFD's). They took the boat around to a ramp and picked up the other two companions. The lake was very rough due to high winds. When the boat turned, a large wave came over the bow swamping the boat. The subjects tried to bail the water but failed. Thinking the boat was going to sink, they capsized it. Four of them stayed with the boat while one who was wearing a life jacket swam to shore for help. Moments later, the victim also decided to swim to shore taking with him a Type IV PFD (seat cushion type). The student wearing the PFD made it to shore and notified U.S. Army Corps of Engineers rangers who moments later rescued the three subjects who had stayed with the boat. The victim was found the next day with his leg through one loop of the Type IV PFD and his head through the other, death was caused by drowning due to hypothermia. The four survivors were taken to the hospital and treated for hypothermia.

   Cause of Accident: Overloading
   Contributing Factors: Rough water and poor weather conditions, not wearing a PFD

7. NARRATIVE: A boat operator, four other adults and 2 children were in a 15-foot motorboat attempting to go ashore to get firewood for a campfire. Since the river was shallow near shore, the operator attempted to speed up a little to beach the boat. The outboard motor lower unit hit the sand and gravel on the river bottom and the operator put his boat in reverse to get it out of the sand. Water began pouring in the back of the boat causing it to capsize. Two persons who were fishing heard screams for help, arrived at the scene and managed to rescue the operator and three of the adult passengers. The operator's wife and two children were lost in the darkness and drowned, their bodies were found the following day. None of the passengers were wearing life jackets but there were not enough for each person in the boat. During the investigation it was determined that all five adults had been drinking and smoking marijuana. The operator's Blood Alcohol Content registered .05% approximately 2.5 hours after the accident, he was placed under arrest for operation of watercraft under the influence of alcohol.

Cause of Accident: Overloading, alcohol consumption
Contributing Factors: Drug use, not wearing PFDs

8. NARRATIVE: Two fishermen decided to anchor their 12 foot aluminum hull boat. One man was seated at the stern of the boat operating the trolling motor. The victim leaned over the starboard bow to lower the anchor. Due to the victims large build and his position in the seat, his movement caused the boat to capsize. Both men were thrown into the water, the victim failed to surface. There were no PFDs on board the craft and neither man wore a life jacket.

   Cause of Accident: Carelessness
   Contributing Factors: No PFDs

9. NARRATIVE: Witnesses reported a 24-year-old man stood up in his 12-foot aluminum hull boat to start the motor when the boat capsized. The victim could not swim and was not wearing a PFD nor were any PFDs aboard the craft. The accident occurred after dark and the victim could not be rescued, the body was recovered three days later. It was reported that the victim had been drinking beer, but may not have been intoxicated.

   Cause of Accident: Carelessness
   Contributing Factors: Alcohol consumption may have been a contributing factor, no PFD

10. NARRATIVE: An 11-year-old boy was killed instantly and his father and brother injured when the personal watercraft they were riding collided with a boat. Both operators attempted to swerve to avoid each other, but the 8-foot craft struck the side and bottom of a 25 foot motorboat. The boat was traveling about 30 miles per hour and the personal watercraft between 15 and 20 miles per hour. The accident occurred on the Fox River during a time when boat traffic was reported moderate with several personal watercraft in the area.

    Cause of Accident: Failure to bear to the right to avoid a head-on collision, failure to adequately reduce speed
    Contributing Factors: Careless and reckless operation

11. NARRATIVE: A 58-year-old boat operator drowned when his 16-foot bass boat capsized in rough water caused by high winds. Four other passengers, including the operator's wife were thrown overboard when the overloaded boat engine stalled and took on water, then capsized. None of the four passengers were wearing PFDs and were rescued by a nearby fisherman.

    Cause of Accident: Overloading, weather conditions
    Contributing Factors: Rough water, not wearing PFDs

12. NARRATIVE: Two 13-year-old boys were lying in the front of a bass boat traveling at a high rate of speed down river. When the boat hit the wake of a passing cabin cruiser, they were thrown from the craft. One of the boys was rescued almost immediately, the victim who was the son of the 40-year-old operator was lost in the fast moving current and drowned. None of the passengers were wearing a PFD. Investigation of the accident revealed that the operator had been heavily drinking and had little experience operating the watercraft.

Cause of Accident: Excessive speed, alcohol consumption, careless operation
Contributing Factors: Not wearing PFDs, inexperienced operator

13. NARRATIVE: A 42 and 25-year-old man drowned when their 14-foot jon boat capsized with two other passengers board. The four adults decided to take the boat out on a small farm pond and while returning to shore, the boat began to fill with water then capsized. Two of the adults swam to shore, the two victims could not swim and drowned. No safety equipment was on board the watercraft and none of the passengers wore a PFD. Investigation revealed that the passengers had been drinking and the boat capacity exceeded 300 pounds over maximum limit. Local authorities reported that the boat capsized during "horseplay". The Blood Alcohol Content of the victims registered .10 and .13%.

    Cause of Accident: Overloading, alcohol consumption
    Contributing Factors: No PFDs, careless and irresponsible conduct aboard the watercraft

14. NARRATIVE: A father and son were fishing in a farm pond, when the 10-foot jon boat apparently overturned when the 300 pound man sat down after standing to cast his fishing line. They began swimming to opposite sides of the pond. The teenager made it safely to shore but his father drowned. Neither were wearing a PFD, no PFDs were in the boat.

    Cause of Accident: Overloading, unequal distribution of weight causing boat to capsize
    Contributing Factors: No PFDs

15. NARRATIVE: A 31-year-old man who was operating a "wet bike", a one-person watercraft similar to a jet ski, collided head-on with a jon boat. The operator of the wet bike reportedly was traveling upstream, looked back over his shoulder and turned the bike directly into the path of a jon boat traveling downstream. Both passengers in the jon boat were thrown overboard due to the impact of the crash, and were treated for injuries. The victim's Blood Alcohol Content registered .13%.

    Cause of Accident: Inexperienced operator, careless operation
    Contributing Factors: Alcohol consumption

16. NARRATIVE: A 42-year-old man, his 13-year-old son and an elderly relative were fishing from a 16-foot pontoon boat. When the man tried to manually start the motor, the boat lurched forward and he was thrown overboard. The motor had stalled and the victim was apparently unaware that the engine was still in gear when he tried to restart it. The two passengers saw the victim's head bob in the water for a moment before he disappeared below the surface. None of them were wearing PFDs.

    Cause of Accident: Fault of equipment, careless operation
    Contributing Factors: Not wearing PFDs

17. NARRATIVE: A man was operating a personal watercraft with his 6-year-old daughter as a passenger and pulling his son on a knee board. The boy either fell off or let go of the board. As the father circled around to his son, he crossed over the tow rope. The girl went into the water to help her brother or she may have fallen off. She jumped in the inside of the tow

rope and it caught her looping around her neck. She was wearing a life jacket but was unable to surface. The incident apparently happened very quickly.

Cause of Accident: No proper lookout
Contributing Factors: None

18. NARRATIVE: The 23-year-old victim and her friend were riding separate personal watercrafts down the Illinois River traveling parallel to each other approximately 15 yards apart. They were zig-zagging but not crossing each other's path, when the victim crossed in front of her friend and the crafts collided. The victim suffered multiple fractures to the jaw/facial area, severe internal injuries and a fractured pelvis, she died within a few hours. The other craft operator incurred a small bruise on her leg.

Cause of Accident: Careless operation
Contributing Factors: Unknown

19. NARRATIVE: The operator/victim of this accident was seated incorrectly atop the driver seat which was very unstable. During a hard port turn to retrieve a "tuber" he was towing, the operator fell overboard and was struck by the boat propeller. His body submerged and was recovered 83 hours later. The cause of death was determined to be head injuries inflicted by the propeller. While alcohol was consumed by the victim per witnesses, no proof was determined to list it as a cause of the accident. The investigative officer felt that the victim would not have been thrown from the watercraft had he been properly seated despite the seat instability.

Cause of Accident: Careless operation, seated incorrectly
Contributing Factors: Alcohol consumption may have been a contributing factor, not wearing a PFD

20. NARRATIVE: As a 43-year-old boat operator was going to drop off passengers at a landing, he turned and hit the rocks of the breakwall with the port side of his craft throwing himself and two passengers from the boat. The operator drowned and two of the three passengers were injured. One of the passengers stated that the boat was not on plane and the bow was up which made it impossible for the operator to see the wall. PFDs were on board, however, no one was wearing one. A toxicology report revealed the operator/victim had a Blood Alcohol Content of .135%.

Cause of Accident: No proper lookout
Contributing Factors: Alcohol consumption, not wearing PFDs

21. NARRATIVE: After fueling at a marina, one of four boats traveling together started down the river followed by a pontoon boat. The third boat was following approximately 50 yards behind the pontoon. The pontoon boat operator stopped to adjust the top on the boat. The operator of the third boat did not see that the pontoon had stopped and ran over the stern causing the operator and his passenger to be thrown into the water. The passenger was killed and the operator received major injuries including broken ribs and a punctured lung.

Cause of Accident: No proper lookout
Contributing Factors: Carelessness

22. NARRATIVE: A 33-year-old fisherman and his 36-year-old partner were in a 14-foot boat on the Illinois River. The operator threw out a front and back anchor to hold his position in the strong river current. He was reported to have leaned over to get something and lost his balance, his passenger tried to move her body to counter-balance the boat but water began to rush in causing it to sink. The passenger swam to a retaining wall, turned and saw her partner struggling in the water, he went under and did not resurface. The victim was a non-swimmer but was not wearing a PFD.

Cause of Accident: Hazardous waters
Contributing Factors: Not wearing a PFD

23. NARRATIVE: The 72-year-old victim was bank fishing in a farm pond. His fishing lure got caught on something and he reportedly pushed a 12-foot jon boat into the water and trolled out to free his lure. The victim recovered his lure and discovered that the drain plug was out and the boat was filling with water. The victim informed an individual on shore of the problem and that he could not swim. The boat filled with water and the victim fell into the water approximately 30 feet from shore and drowned. Attempts by the individual on shore to rescue the victim were unsuccessful.

Cause of Accident: Failure to have drain plugged
Contributing Factors: Not wearing a PFD

24. NARRATIVE: Three men were about 20 yards from shore in a small runabout craft. The weather suddenly changed and as they attempted to turn the craft around to head in, waves started to come over the stern. All three men leaned over the side of the craft causing it to capsize. One man drowned and the other two were rescued by a life guard on shore. Only one of the passengers, a survivor, wore a life jacket. All three men were large in size, one weighed over 300 pounds. The boat may have been overloaded.

Cause of Accident: Overloading, hazardous waters due to weather conditions
Contributing Factors: Not wearing a PFD

25. NARRATIVE: A boat docked in a harbor and was hooked up to an electrical outlet provided by a yacht club. The 30-volt boat cord had been altered to fit into a 50-volt connection. The boat owner had connected his boat to the 50-volt outlet causing the boat to be electrically charged with no ground. The man's wife was swimming around the boat and apparently made contact with a rod in the water which was attached to the twin board engines. An autopsy revealed the victim drowned due to electrocution.

Cause of Accident: Electrocution due to equipment
Contributing Factors: Unknown

26. NARRATIVE: Two elderly men were fishing in a small jon boat when both apparently moved to the same side of the boat causing it to capsize. The two men hung on to the boat for about an hour trying to kick their way to shallow water, but were unable to do so. One of the men weakened, let go of the boat and drowned. An observer spotted the overturned boat and called for help. The other man was later rescued by the fire department and taken to the hospital and treated for hypothermia. Neither men had or were wearing PFDs.

Cause of Accident: Unequal distribution of weight causing boat to capsize
Contributing Factors: Not wearing a PFD

Accident narrative information compiled by:

Sheila White
Safety Education Administrator
Illinois Department of Conservation
Office of Law Enforcement

William Sinkus, Region IV
Volunteer Services Coordinator
Illinois Department of Conservation
Office of Law Enforcement