

Last edited by John Sewell June 7

The Department of Public Safety (DPS) enjoyed a very successful year during 2001, and will continue building on those accomplishments during 2002. In keeping with Governor Ronnie Musgrove's call for a move toward electronic government, DPS is unveiling its new capability to renew and reinstate driver's licenses via the Internet. This service will allow motorists to renew their license from the comfort of their homes. It will be a safe, secure and convenient way to renew or have your license reinstated without having to make the trip to your local driver's license station. This is DPS's latest success, but the list of accomplishments and goals is getting longer by the day.

One of the most monumental accomplishments came from the Mississippi Highway Safety Patrol (MHP) during 2001. Last year, there was a reduction of nearly 26% in the number of fatalities on highways patrolled by MHP. This reduction was responsible for 133 lives being saved, when comparing last year to 2000. This reduction was one of the highest in the United States. One component of last year's success was a public awareness campaign focusing on the importance of seat belt usage. During May 2002, MHP conducted a similar campaign in hopes of further increasing seat belt usage. Last year during the campaign, the usage rate increased from 50% to 62%. This year the goal is a 73% usage rate and more lives saved.

The extraordinary achievements were not unique to MHP during 2001. The State Crime Lab drastically reduced the backlog of cases while still receiving approximately the same number of new cases. This improvement will mean better service for the law enforcement community and the general public, as these cases are resolved.

The Department of Public Safety's Driver's Services Bureau added an Identity Fraud Unit to address the ever-increasing problem of identity theft, which has become more important since September 11, 2001. Often identity fraud leaves its victims financially devastated when a person's social security number and other identifiers are stolen. The thief then assumes the victim's identity and, using the victim's good credit, runs up debt in the victim's name. Many times that bad debt is difficult for the victim to remove from their credit report.

Another success story from DPS is the Mississippi Law Enforcement Officers' Training Academy (MLEOTA). In March, the Academy graduated one of its largest basic law enforcement classes in the history of the institution. Enrollment at MLEOTA continues to increase over classes in past years. In the fall of 2002, MLEOTA will hold its 200<sup>th</sup> basic class, which is also a significant accomplishment.

As we continue to serve the people of the State of Mississippi, our efforts toward making DPS one of the premier state agencies not only in Mississippi but also anywhere in the nation will not diminish.