

News for Immediate Release

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PennDOT is Prepared for Approaching Winter Storm; Motorists Urged to Avoid Unnecessary Travel: Drivers Reminded to Pack Emergency Kit

Harrisburg – With significant snow accumulations forecast for much of Pennsylvania on Feb. 5 and 6, PennDOT today urged motorists to avoid traveling Friday night through Saturday evening and urged those who must venture out to pack an emergency survival kit.

“Travel during the storm will be extremely risky and motorists really need to ask themselves if their trip is an absolute necessity or if it can be avoided until after the storm has passed,” said PennDOT Deputy Secretary for Highway Administration Scott Christie, P.E. “The best decision is to avoid unnecessary travel, but if you must go, be sure that your vehicle is prepared and that you have an emergency kit packed.”

A basic kit should include non-perishable food, water, blanket, small shovel and warm clothes. When preparing an emergency kit, motorists should take into account special needs of passengers such as baby food, pet supplies or medications and pack accordingly.

In addition to packing a survival kit, motorists should be sure that a relative or friend knows what time they will travel, the route they’ll be using and their destination.

Motorists also need to be sure that their vehicle is ready for traveling on ice and snow-covered roads. Be sure to check the vehicle’s belts, hoses, battery and brakes. Drivers should also check that the heater and defroster are working properly and that the wipers properly clear the windshield.

PennDOT also recommends that motorists check their tires for proper inflation and sufficient tread depth. If travel is an absolute necessity, drivers should consider using dedicated snow tires or carrying a set of tire chains.

“When winter precipitation is occurring, especially heavy precipitation, motorists must slow down, travel with extreme caution and remember that roadways will not be bare until several hours or more after the precipitation stops,” Christie said. “Safety is always our utmost concern, but we also need drivers to use common sense and be realistic about the conditions they will encounter.”

According to Christie, interstates and other high-volume expressways are treated first during winter storms. Secondary state routes are a lower priority and during severe winter storms, deeper accumulations will occur on these roadways.

The department's primary goal is to keep roads passable, not completely free of ice and snow. If the entire state is impacted by the storm, PennDOT will have 5,400 crew members rotating shifts to keep more than 2,200 PennDOT plow trucks operating around the clock, if necessary. PennDOT will continue to treat roadways throughout the storm until after precipitation stops and roads are clear. The department has more than 600,000 tons of salt in stock around the state.

In addition to department-force vehicles, PennDOT has agreements with more than 700 municipalities for them to clear state roads within their jurisdictions. The department also rents approximately 270 trucks and operators to assist with snow removal.

The department asks motorists to allow plenty of space when driving near plow trucks. Also, for their own safety and the safety of plow operators, motorists should never attempt to pass a truck while it is plowing or spreading winter materials.

Because weather and road conditions can deteriorate quickly, motorists should always check the weather forecast before traveling. Road conditions for interstates and some limited-access highways are available by visiting www.511pa.com before you leave home, or by calling 511 while stopped in a safe location.

For more winter driving tips and information on how PennDOT treats winter storms, visit www.dot.state.pa.us/winter.

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