



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

October 10, 2019

Wolf Administration Outlines Winter Preparations, Guidance for Public Readiness

Winter Maintenance Positions Available Statewide

Harrisburg, PA – With the winter season approaching, Pennsylvania Department of Transportation (PennDOT) Secretary Leslie S. Richards, Pennsylvania Turnpike Commission (PTC) CEO Mark Compton, and Pennsylvania Emergency Management Agency (PEMA) Director Randy Padfield held an event today at PEMA to outline the commonwealth’s plans for winter services, highlighting the tools the public can use to successfully prepare for the season.

“Our number-one priority is safety, and that guides our winter preparations and operations,” Richards said. “We are ready for the season ahead and want the public to prepare and be aware of the tools available to them.”

The public can also access travel information on nearly 40,000 state-maintained roadway miles year-round at www.511PA.com, and during the winter they can find plow-truck locations and details of when state-maintained roadways were last plowed. The information is made possible by PennDOT’s Automated Vehicle Location (AVL) technology, which uses units in each of the over 2,500 department-owned and rented plow trucks to send a cellular signal showing where a truck is located. Motorists can expect additional enhancements to 511PA throughout the winter season.

“We started winter planning after the last season ended, and we encourage the public to not only take advantage of these travel tools, but also make sure they’re prepared as well,” Richards said. “Winter maintenance is a critical and difficult task, and motorists are partners in making this season a safe one.”

To help the public prepare for the season and share information about winter services, PennDOT offers operational information and traveler resources at www.penndot.gov/winter. The site also has a complete winter guide with detailed information about winter services in each of PennDOT’s 11 engineering districts.

This winter, the Pennsylvania Turnpike Commission (PTC), is prepared to battle the elements as well, with 380 trucks, plows and salt spreaders and 400 licensed equipment operators ready to activate 24/7 staffing this fall. Their goal is to keep the Turnpike system

as free of snow and ice as possible, but motorists too have a responsibility to know their own winter driving skills and their vehicle's performance.

“Our professional crews work hard, but they cannot perform miracles. Winter storms are a fact of life in our region, and drivers may have impractical expectations, especially early in the season; never assume roads will be free of ice and snow during and after a blizzard,” said PA Turnpike CEO Mark Compton. “Remember, wintertime driving requires reducing your speed to well below the posted limit, even in an all-wheel or four-wheel drive. Recognize that getting there is going to take longer — perhaps considerably longer.”

With \$223 million budgeted for this winter's statewide operations, PennDOT deploys about 4,500 on-the-road workers, has more than 620,000 tons of salt on hand across the state and will take salt deliveries throughout the winter.

PennDOT is actively seeking more than 500 temporary equipment operators statewide for the winter season to supplement the department's full-time staff. Details on minimum requirements, such as possession of a CDL, as well as application information, are available at www.employment.pa.gov. Through the same website, job seekers can apply for other types of non-operator, winter positions such as diesel and construction equipment mechanics, welders, clerks and more.

If motorists encounter snow or ice-covered roads, they should slow down, increase their following distance and avoid distractions. Last winter in Pennsylvania, preliminary data shows that there were 440 crashes resulting in one fatality and 221 injuries on snowy, slushy or ice-covered roadways where aggressive-driving behaviors such as speeding or making careless lane changes were factors.

Motorists should prepare for potential bad weather by ensuring they have supplies in their cars before heading out: food; water; blankets; extra gloves and hats; cell phone charger; hand or foot warmers; windshield brush and scraper; and any specialized items like medications or baby and pet supplies.

“We know that winter weather can hit hard and fast in Pennsylvania,” said PEMA Director Randy Padfield. “But if we know it's coming, we can prepare for it, and we all have a role to play in making sure our loved ones are ready for winter driving.”

Padfield said it's also important to know the difference between a weather watch and warning:

- A watch means there is increased risk of a hazardous weather event, but its occurrence, location, or timing is still uncertain. Pay attention to forecasts and plan out what you will do if/when it occurs.
- A warning means the weather event is imminent or is happening. Take immediate action to protect lives and property.

In addition, snow squalls can often produce dangerous and deadly travel hazards on otherwise clear winter days. The National Weather Service now issues “Snow Squall Warnings” which alert drivers of whiteout conditions and slippery roadways, so motorists can avoid traveling directly into these dangerous squalls.

For more information on PennDOT's winter preparations and additional winter-driving resources for motorists, visit the department's winter website, www.PennDOT.gov/winter.

Motorists can check conditions on more than 40,000 roadway miles, including color-coded winter conditions on 2,900 miles, by visiting www.511PA.com. 511PA, which is free and available 24 hours a day, provides traffic delay warnings, weather forecasts, traffic speed information, and access to more than 950 traffic cameras. 511PA is also available through a free smartphone application for iPhone and Android devices, by calling 5-1-1, or by following regional twitter alerts accessible on the 511PA website.

For more PennDOT information, visit www.penndot.gov. Follow PennDOT Information on Twitter at www.twitter.com/PennDOTNews, and follow the department on Facebook at www.facebook.com/pennsylvaniadepartmentoftransportation and Instagram at www.instagram.com/pennsylvaniadot.

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