



Pennsylvania
Department of Transportation



Pennsylvania
Emergency Management Agency



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MEDIA CONTACTS: Erin Waters-Trasatt, DOT, ewaterstra@pa.gov or 717-783-8800; Ruth Miller, PEMA, ruthmiller@pa.gov; Marissa Orbanek, PTC, 267-408-5151

Shapiro Administration Outlines Winter Preparations and Guidance for Pennsylvanians, Highlights New Information Tools and Employment Opportunities

Thousands of equipment operators and vehicles are prepared to tackle winter weather.

PennDOT encourages Pennsylvanians to apply for temporary equipment operator positions statewide for the winter season to help supplement the department's full-time staff and keep travelers safe.

New public information tools will enhance safety this winter season.

Harrisburg, PA – Today, Pennsylvania Emergency Management Agency (PEMA) Director Randy Padfield, Pennsylvania Department of Transportation (PennDOT) Secretary Mike Carroll, and Pennsylvania Turnpike Commission (PA Turnpike) CEO Mark Compton held a media briefing to outline plans for winter services, highlight job opportunities, and discuss how Pennsylvanians can prepare for the season.

“Winter weather in Pennsylvania can be unpredictable and state agencies are ready for it, but the public also plays an important role in safety on the roads during inclement weather and we want them to be prepared as well,” said **Padfield**. “Checking the forecast and road conditions before heading out, having multiple ways to get weather alerts and having basic supplies in your vehicle can make a difference in getting to your destination safely.”

Padfield said basic necessities like nonperishable food, water, warm clothing and blankets, phone chargers, snow scrapers and brushes, and specialized items such as medication or supplies for children and pets should be kept in vehicles throughout the winter travel season. More suggestions for emergency necessities, including checklists, are available [online](#).

To help the public prepare for the season and share information about winter services, PennDOT offers operational information and traveler resources on its [winter web page](#). The site also has a [complete winter guide](#) with detailed information about winter services in each of [PennDOT's 11 engineering districts](#).

“Winter road maintenance is a core part of PennDOT’s mission, and the department has not only made its usual seasonal preparations but also continued to find new ways to help the public navigate winter travel,” **Carroll** said. “Keeping our roads as safe as possible is a team effort, and we’d love to have people join our team – sitting in our plow trucks, but also as our teammates in getting everyone home safely each day.”

The Shapiro Administration is also adding and expanding tools and safety measures for the public:

- PennDOT is expanding automated weather messaging corridors where roadside weather station readings are used to alert drivers of potential whiteout and slippery driving conditions ahead. The department piloted a corridor last winter on Interstates 79 and 90 in Erie County and will be expanding this technology to major interstate corridors throughout the state. On these corridors, when weather stations in the area indicate low visibility, high levels of snow intensity, and a decrease in the friction levels of the pavement, changeable message signs approaching the area are automatically updated with warning messages to inform drivers they are approaching dangerous driving conditions: “Whiteout conditions ahead, reduce speed.”
- As part of PennDOT’s data-sharing agreement with Waze (through which the department currently provides crash, work-zone, and other data for navigation purposes), beginning this winter PennDOT plow trucks and Freeway Service Patrol vehicles will appear within the navigation provider’s “Roadside Hazard” category. Waze users will hear and see alerts about the vehicles as they approach them, providing enhanced safety and information for the public and those working on the roads.
- PennDOT is partnering with Fleetworthy (formerly Drivewyze) – a trucking information application – to provide vehicle restriction information to truck drivers when they’re in effect during the winter season. Truck drivers using the service will receive an alert in their vehicle when approaching an interchange with a road where a restriction is in effect, providing an additional, advance notice when inclement weather requires these restrictions. Through the same partnership, PennDOT and the PA Turnpike provide work-zone truck-specific alerts through this service.

The public can 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 technology, which uses units in the over 2,700 department-owned and rented plow trucks to send a cellular signal showing a truck’s location.

As part of its mission and commitment to safety, the PA Turnpike has been preparing its vehicles and system to support roadway safety during the winter months. Winter inspections are underway at maintenance sheds across the system, with more than 600 equipment operators, safety patrol personnel and traffic operators prepared to provide [24/7 winter operations](#) and roadside assistance. To keep customers informed and connected, motorists can dial *11 for roadside assistance or use a hands-free device, voice command, or have a passenger text **INFO** to **47676** when stuck in a traffic backup. The PA Turnpike is also expanding customer communications through real-time travel restriction updates on its website chatbot, new incident notification pilots at service plazas and potential winter weather alerts through Fleetworthy. Returning to the roadway is [Plow Force One](#) (named last year after a social media contest), the PA Turnpike's 550-horsepower super snowplow, which debuted last year and can clear more than two lanes of snow in a single pass.

"Safety is our top priority, and we take pride in keeping the PA Turnpike open and moving throughout the winter," said **Compton**. "While our crews work around the clock to keep the roadway safe and clear, winter safety is a shared responsibility. We ask drivers to do their part by slowing down, giving snowplows room to work and adjusting their travel plans, where possible."

With an estimate of over \$219.5 million budgeted for this winter's statewide operations, PennDOT deploys nearly 4,700 on-the-road workers, has more than 622,000 tons of salt on hand statewide, and will take salt deliveries throughout the winter.

[PennDOT is actively seeking](#) 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/penndot. Through the same website and www.employment.pa.gov, job seekers can apply for other 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. Additionally, seat belts should always be worn in a vehicle. Last winter in Pennsylvania, preliminary data shows that there were 8,919 crashes, 36 fatalities, and 3,251 injuries on snowy, slushy or ice-covered roadways. Twelve of the people who died weren't wearing a seat belt, and 15 of the fatalities were in crashes where a driver was going too fast for conditions and drove out of their lane.

Padfield noted that the public should 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.

Motorists should prepare for potential wintry 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.

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 1,200 traffic cameras.

511PA is also available through a free smartphone application for iPhone and Android devices, by calling 5-1-1, or by [following local alerts on X](#).

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