



State of Illinois
Pat Quinn, Governor

Illinois Department of Transportation
Erica J. Borggren, Acting Secretary

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CONTACT:
Paris Ervin (IDOT) 217.782.5025
Carson Quinn (IDOT) 312.814.0095
Monique Bond (ISP) 312.814.8367
Dan Rozek (Tollway) 630.241.6800 x 2392

Transportation, Law Enforcement Agencies Announce Preparations, Driving Reminders for Upcoming Winter

Drivers Urged to Slow Down, Buckle Up, Put Down Handheld Devices

CHICAGO –With colder weather rapidly approaching and winter right around the corner, the Illinois Department of Transportation (IDOT), the Illinois Tollway and the Illinois State Police (ISP) today announced that they are fully prepared for the upcoming snow-and-ice season and once again reminded motorists that when there is “Ice and Snow, Take it Slow.” Throughout the state, salt domes are being restocked following last year’s historic winter and snow plows and emergency equipment are ready to be pressed into action during the coming months.

“The Illinois Department of Transportation spends the whole year preparing for this critical time of year on all roads and highways. We take great pride in our snow-and-ice response and commitment to safety,” said Acting Illinois Transportation Secretary Erica Borggren. “While our top priority is to make sure our roadways are safe as possible, we do ask the motoring public to do its part as well. That means staying off your handheld devices, always wearing a seatbelt and allowing for extra time in all of your travels this winter.”

For the upcoming winter, 1,768 trucks statewide will be available for deployment by IDOT crews to keep about 16,000 miles of state routes – the equivalent of driving from Chicago to Miami almost 12 times – clear and passable. Last year, IDOT spent \$131.4 million on snow removal and spread almost 800,000 tons of salt statewide. This winter, IDOT will have access to more than 1 million tons of salt if needed.

For years, ISP, Tollway and IDOT have worked together to urge motorists to drive defensively and safely in winter weather.

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“An alert and prepared driver is a safe driver,” said ISP Director Hiram Grau. “Winter driving conditions can be hazardous and life threatening for motorists and first responders if the necessary road safety precautions are not taken.”

The Illinois Tollway has increased its fleet to 185 snowplows and has restocked its salt supplies so it has more than 83,000 tons available to keep its 286-mile system open and operating for the 1.4 million drivers who use the Tollway daily.

“Whenever the snow falls, we will be working around-the-clock to keep our roadways clear for customers who depend on us to safely reach their destinations,” said Illinois Tollway Executive Director Kristi Lafleur. “Drivers can help by taking a few simple precautions, including slowing down, leaving a larger space between vehicles and giving our snowplows enough room to do their work.”

The state’s “Ice and Snow, Take it Slow” annual campaign urges all motorists to slow down, build extra time in their schedules for travel during the winter months, increase the driving distance between vehicles and strongly consider refraining from travel during winter weather events. Other safety tips to remember:

- Don’t crowd the plow – a snow plow operator’s field of vision is restricted. You may see them, but they may not see you.
- Watch out for black ice on roads that appear clear but can be treacherous. Take it slow when approaching intersections, ramps, bridges and shady areas - all are prone to icing which is often invisible.
- Try to keep your gas tank at least two-thirds full to help prevent the vehicle’s fuel line from freezing.
- Do not travel during bad weather unless absolutely necessary - if you do have to make a trip, check the forecast and make sure someone is aware of your travel route.
- Carry an emergency car care kit that contains jumper cables, flares or reflectors, windshield washer fluid, a small ice scraper, traction material, blankets, non-perishable food and a first aid kit.
- Carry a cell phone. In the Chicago area, dial *999 for roadway assistance.
- Always wear a safety belt.
- Motorists are urged to check travel conditions before any trip. You can get road condition information by calling 1-800-452-IDOT (4368), Illinois Tollway information by calling

1-800-TOLL-FYI or online at www.gettingaroundillinois.com and click on the “winter road conditions” icon.

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