

Motorists Urged to Slow Down; Roads Remain Snow Packed and Icy Statewide

Motorists Driving Too Fast for Dangerous Conditions

CHICAGO – The Illinois Department of Transportation (IDOT) reminded motorists today to slow down when traveling during the severe weather conditions. Road conditions are improving in some areas, but the majority of roads throughout the state are still snow and ice covered. Blowing and drifting snow remains a problem, and the extreme low temperatures reduce the effectiveness of the salt being spread by IDOT winter weather crews. Motorists are still encouraged to stay home and avoid travel until roads are clear and safe.

“Motorists need to heed to our advice and slow down on Illinois roadways,” said Illinois Transportation Secretary Ann L. Schneider. “The roads are snow packed, extremely slick and dangerous. If motorists have to travel today, please take it slow, buckle up, avoid distractions and allow plenty of extra time. We want everyone to make it to their destination safely.”

IDOT winter weather crews will continue to be on the job as necessary to plow and salt to help ensure roads are clear and passable. For those who have to travel, check www.gettingaroundillinois.com for the latest road closures and road conditions. Most roads have re-opened, but there are still some road closures throughout the state due to snow and ice. The severe weather has also encouraged Amtrak to cancel a number of state supported trains. To find out if your train was cancelled, visit www.Amtrak.com or call 1-800-USA-RAIL.

The National Weather Service forecasts dangerously cold temperatures with strong winds to continue to cause extensive blowing and drifting snow throughout the day. Historic cold temperatures are expected throughout Illinois for the next several days with temperatures ranging from 5 to 16 below zero, wind chills ranging from 25 to 35 degrees below zero and winds of 20 to 30 mph through Tuesday.

Currently, IDOT has 1,755 trucks assigned to snow duty across the state, and nearly 3,700 full- and part-time employees available to help ensure roads are clear and passable. IDOT will continue to monitor the weather and plan accordingly.

Drivers are reminded to exercise caution when snow and ice affect roadways, and IDOT advises travel only when absolutely necessary during winter storms or when temperatures are extremely low. During the severely cold weather expected, the U.S. Department of Homeland Security advises that Illinois residents limit exposure to cold temperatures, dress in layers, check in on others who may need additional assistance, keep vehicles in good repair, and bring pets indoors. For a list of warming centers in Illinois, visit <http://www2.illinois.gov/KeepWarm/Pages/warmingcenter.aspx>.

Other safety tips to remember:

- Allow extra time for travel during the winter months.
- 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.
- Be aware that black ice can form on roads that appear clear and the unseen ice can be treacherous. Take it slow when approaching intersections, off-ramps, bridges and shady areas - all are prone to black ice, which is often invisible.
- Always 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 and schedule.

- Always 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 few extra blankets in your car, and perhaps an extra coat to ensure protection in case of a breakdown.
- Carry a cell phone and dial *999 for roadway assistance in case of emergency (but remember using handheld phones while driving is illegal if it is not an emergency situation).
- Always wear a seat belt, front seat or back – it's the law.
- Check travel and road conditions routinely 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.