



**OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR
PAT QUINN**

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Governor Quinn Directs State Agencies to Combat Severe Winter Weather

*Opens More than 100 Warming Centers; Readies State
Plows in Anticipation of Snowfall; Urges Safety During
Severe Low Temperatures*

CHICAGO – As Illinois battles severe low temperatures and anticipated snowfall, Governor Pat Quinn today is directing Illinois state agencies to be on high alert to help combat winter storms. The Governor also announced that the state has opened more than 100 warming centers across Illinois to provide shelter for residents from the bitter cold and has more than 1,700 trucks ready to combat the anticipated snow and ice. Today's announcement is part of Governor Quinn's agenda to keeping all Illinois residents safe and warm this winter.

"During this severe winter weather, our state agencies are on high alert and doing everything they can to help our residents stay safe and warm," Governor Quinn said. "In addition to utilizing our warming centers, I urge residents to stay safe on the roads and take special precautions like dressing in layers during the severe low temperatures and expected snowfall."

The warming centers are located at Illinois Department of Human Services (IDHS) offices throughout the state. IDHS warming centers are open to the public during regular business hours, Monday through Friday from 8:30 a.m. to 5 p.m. To find a warming center near you, call the IDHS hotline at (800) 843-6154 or visit www.keepwarm.illinois.gov.

The Governor also directed the Illinois Department of Transportation (IDOT) to ready more than 1,768 trucks and more than 3,700 employees in preparation of the anticipated snowfall overnight. The statewide fleet will help remove anticipated snow and ice on 1,245 state routes that will create hazardous driving conditions over next few

days. Motorists are advised to be on alert for slick roadways and to take extra precautions when traveling.

“The Illinois Department of Transportation is fully prepared to respond to the winter weather heading our way,” Acting Illinois Transportation Secretary Erica Borggren said. “While our top priority always is to make sure our roadways are safe as possible, we also ask the motoring public to pay close attention to the changing conditions. Please be prepared to reduce your speed and build some extra time into your schedules. During storms or when temperatures are extremely low, travel is not advised unless absolutely necessary.”

National Weather Service forecasters are predicting one to seven inches of snow will fall across the northern half of Illinois starting tonight and into Tuesday morning. Bitterly cold air with wind chills approaching 30 below are forecasted across the entire state through Thursday, significantly reducing the ability of salt to melt snow and ice, particularly during the overnight hours. Throughout the day today, IDOT has been pretreating bridge decks and elevated driving surfaces that are susceptible to icing.

Before traveling, motorists are urged to check for the latest road conditions and road closures at www.gettingaroundillinois.com.

The Illinois Tollway has prepared its full fleet of 185 snowplows and more than 200 staff and supervisors per shift in response to the anticipated snowfall. The Tollway’s Snow Operations Center will also open to manage the agency’s response across its 286-mile system.

“Our plows will be spreading salt and clearing snow to keep our roadways open and ensure the safest possible trip for our customers,” Illinois Tollway Executive Director Kristi Lafleur said. “We remind motorists to remain alert and adjust to road conditions during any winter weather by reducing speed, maintaining a safe margin between vehicles and giving Tollway plows the space they need to clear the roads safely and efficiently.”

In addition to working to keep roads free of snow and ice, the Illinois Tollway is providing drivers with information to help them reach their destinations safely during winter weather events. The Illinois Tollway’s Traffic and Incident Management System (TIMS) provides real-time travel times and roadway conditions on over-the-road electronic message signs throughout the Tollway. Real-time roadway incident information including the type of incident, location and impact on traffic is also available on www.illinoistollway.com.

The Illinois State Police (ISP) are warning motorists to plan accordingly and make safety a priority by driving at a safe speed, allowing plenty of distance from other vehicles to safely maneuver, ensuring vehicle lights are functioning properly, watching for snow removal equipment and exiting the road to a safe location if driving conditions become too hazardous.

“Motorists should take every safety precaution while driving during extreme weather conditions, so that they arrive and depart to and from their destinations safely,” ISP Director Hiram Grau said. “Reducing speed, avoiding distractions and paying attention to emergency vehicles—especially when roads and interstates are icy and visibility is reduced—will make driving conditions safer.”

The Illinois Emergency Management Agency (IEMA) encourages travelers to have a vehicle emergency kit that includes water, snack foods, flashlight, blanket, extra warm clothing, sand or kitty litter, shovel, windshield scraper with brush and booster cables. More winter weather survival tips are available at www.Ready.Illinois.gov.

“A vehicle emergency kit is a must-have during the winters in Illinois,” IEMA Director Jonathon Monken said. “If you get stuck or slide off the road, it could be hours before help can reach you. You need to be able to stay safe and warm until that help arrives.”

Governor Quinn and the Illinois Department on Aging are also encouraging relatives and friends to make daily visits or calls to older adults living alone.

Older persons are more susceptible to the cold, so seniors should set their thermostats above 65 degrees. People who lower the thermostat to reduce heating bills risk developing hypothermia, a potentially fatal condition in which the body temperature drops dangerously low. Also at an increased risk are older people who take certain medications, drink alcohol, lack proper nutrition and who have conditions such as arthritis, stroke, Alzheimer’s disease and Parkinson's disease.

The following are some tips that older adults are encouraged to do to best handle cold temperatures:

- Dress in layers, both indoors and outdoors. Keep active. Make a list of exercises and activities to do indoors.
- Eat well and drink 10 glasses of water daily; Stock up on non-perishable food supplies, just in case.
- Keep extra medications in the house. If this is not possible, make arrangements to have someone pick up and deliver your medications.

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