

Governor Wolf Outlines Preparations for Latest Severe Winter Weather Forecast

Commonwealth Asks Drivers to Avoid, Postpone Unnecessary Travel

Harrisburg, PA – With a new severe weather system forecast to impact wide areas of eastern Pennsylvania Wednesday, Governor Tom Wolf said state agencies have prepared an aggressive plan to reduce disruptions, but he added that postponing any unnecessary travel will help state crews in meeting their missions.

“This storm may not have the extremely high winds as the one last week, but it will dump significant amounts of snow across a wider area and that prospect is moving us to take additional aggressive steps to restrict heavier vehicles from the interstates,” Governor Wolf said. “We must remember that weather is to a large extent unpredictable, but we are doing our utmost to station resources in as effective way as possible.”

Beginning at midnight on Tuesday, PennDOT will impose a ban on empty straight trucks, large combination vehicles (tandem trailers and double trailers), tractors hauling empty trailers, trailers pulled by passenger vehicles, motorcycles and recreational vehicles, or RVs, on:

- Interstate 78 from the junction with Interstate 81 in Lebanon County to the New Jersey line.
- I-80 from the junction with Interstate 81 to the New Jersey line.
- I-81 from the Maryland line to the New York State line.
- I-84 from the junction with Interstate 81 to the New York State line.
- I-380 from the junction with Interstate 80 to the junction with Interstate 81.

At the same time, the Pennsylvania Turnpike Commission will prohibit these vehicles from traveling the northeastern extension between the Lehigh Tunnel and Clarks Summit.

Additionally, at 8:00 AM on Wednesday, all commercial vehicles will be banned on I-380 and I-84 within Pennsylvania.

Restrictions will remain in place as long as warranted through the storm. As conditions develop, speed restrictions and wider truck and vehicle bans will be considered on these routes.

The heaviest snows are expected to fall during much of the day Wednesday. In anticipation, PennDOT is moving five plow trucks and two graders along with 18 employees into Pike County to address any issues on Interstate 84, as well as 20 plow trucks and two graders along with 46 employees to address any issues on Interstates 80, 380, and Route 33 in Monroe County and the Lehigh Valley. The

crews are being moved from western Pennsylvania to assist in this storm response.

Also, two heavy duty tow trucks are being positioned along Interstate 84 in Pike County and one heavy duty tow truck in each of Luzerne and Lackawanna counties to deal with any issues on Interstates 80 and 81.

“I cannot stress enough the importance for everyone to heed weather forecasts, listen to directions from emergency officials, and plan accordingly,” Governor Wolf said.

If traveling during severe winter weather, motorists should make sure their gas tank is full and they pack an emergency kit, which should include non-perishable food, water, blanket, small shovel, and warm clothes. Remember also any special needs, such as baby food, pet supplies or medications.

When queues form and roadways are expected to be closed for long periods because of crashes and other traffic disruptions, PennDOT and the Pennsylvania Emergency Management Agency can activate the 511PAConnect system to establish contact via cellphone to trapped motorists.

Motorists are reminded that roadways will not be free of snow while precipitation is falling. With freezing temperatures, roads that look wet may be icy, and extra caution is needed when approaching bridges and highway ramps where ice can form without warning. Motorists should leave plenty of space – six car lengths --- when following a truck that is plowing or spreading winter materials. Also, reduced speeds are a must when traveling during snow events.

While PennDOT recommends not traveling during winter storms, motorists are encouraged to “Know Before You Go” by checking conditions on more than 40,000 roadway 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 850 traffic cameras. Users can also see plow truck statuses and travel alerts along a specific route using the “Check My Route” tool.

511PA is also available through a smartphone application for iPhone and Android devices, by calling 5-1-1, or by following regional Twitter alerts accessible on the 511PA website.

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