

## **Governor Wolf, State Officials Provide Update on Winter Storm Preparations, Resident Safety**

**Harrisburg, PA** – Governor Tom Wolf and state officials are urging Pennsylvanians to pay close attention to weather forecasts and take steps to be ready for the first snowstorm of 2016, and one of the most significant widespread storms to impact the state in several years. Governor Wolf has declared a state of emergency to ensure state agencies can respond with resources as quickly as possible.

“We are urging Pennsylvanians to stay calm, but be prepared,” Governor Wolf said. “State agencies are preparing for the worst, tracking conditions in real time and collaborating on our response. Residents should prioritize their safety and heed all warnings from law enforcement and emergency officials.”

Current forecasts call for the storm to enter the state late in the afternoon on Friday in western Pennsylvania and late in the evening on Friday in eastern Pennsylvania. Snowfall will continue through Saturday evening, with the highest amounts along and south of the turnpike corridor. Amounts will diminish from south to north toward I-80. Some locations in southern Pennsylvania could see 12-18 inches or more of snow.

### **PEMA Tips**

“This is not a time to panic or overreact to forecasts,” said Richard D. Flinn Jr., director of the Pennsylvania Emergency Management Agency (PEMA). “We know this storm is coming, and every Pennsylvanian can take advantage of the time we have to make sure they and their families are ready with home and car emergency kits.”

Flinn said families should be prepared to survive for up to three days at home without outside assistance. A home emergency kit should contain:

- non-perishable food
- bottled water (one gallon per person per day. A family of 4 needs a minimum of 12 gallons)
- medications
- flashlight with spare batteries
- first aid kit
- warm clothing; and
- any specialized items such as baby supplies or pet food.

Flinn also said power outages should be reported immediately to your utility provider. If you do lose power, don't try to heat your home using a generator, your stove, charcoal grill, camp stove, or other gasoline or charcoal-burning device inside your home, basement, or garage or near a window. Carbon monoxide from these sources can build up in enclosed or partially enclosed spaces. Carbon monoxide is an odorless, colorless, tasteless gas that can incapacitate victims before they're aware they've been exposed. Symptoms of carbon monoxide poisoning are often mistaken for the flu and include nausea, headaches, dizziness, disorientation and fatigue. If you suspect you've been exposed to carbon monoxide, leave the home or building immediately and call 9-1-1 or seek medical attention.

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### **PennDOT Tips**

PennDOT actively monitors and is prepared to combat winter weather with its roughly 2,200 trucks, plows and salt spreaders operated by 4,800 department operators statewide. While the department has more than 733,000 tons of salt and over 570,000 tons of anti-skid on hand, motorists are urged to use common sense and caution in traveling in this and other winter storms.

“Whenever there’s any type of precipitation, drivers need to adjust their speeds and travel plans accordingly,” PennDOT Secretary Leslie S. Richards said. “Our crews are out around the clock during storms, but roads won’t be bare while it’s snowing. We ask the public to join us in making roads safer by postponing unnecessary travel and, if they must drive during storms, to plan for extra time and drive according to the conditions on the road.”

To help motorists make decisions about travel, Richards encouraged visiting [www.511PA.com](http://www.511PA.com) for travel information such as incidents, winter road conditions and to view traffic cameras. The public can also track more than 700 department and contracted trucks on interstates and expressways statewide with the site’s new “Plow Trucks” option.

Richards also noted that when traveling at any time during the winter, drivers should have their vehicle emergency kits packed or restocked. The kit should contain items such as non-perishable food, water, first-aid supplies, warm clothes, a blanket, cell phone charger and a small snow shovel. Motorists should tailor their kits to any specific needs that they or their families have such as baby supplies, extra medication and pet supplies.

The commonwealth’s ReadyPA campaign encourages citizens to take three basic steps before an emergency occurs: Be Informed, Be Prepared, Be Involved. More detailed information, including free downloadable emergency home and car kit checklists and emergency plan templates, is available online at [www.ReadyPA.org](http://www.ReadyPA.org). The free ReadyPA app is also available for both Apple and Android devices.

### **State Police Tips**

State police are also reminding motorists that planning ahead for winter is a good way to avoid weather-related problems.

“If at all possible, residents should avoid driving in harsh winter conditions,” said Pennsylvania State Police Commissioner, Colonel Tyree C. Blocker. “If it is necessary that you drive, there are a number of additional actions that drivers can take to make our roads safer for ourselves and others.”

If it is necessary that you drive, the state police offer these winter weather driving tips:

- Just slow down! Driving too fast for conditions is one of the leading causes of crashes in bad weather. It takes much longer to bring your vehicle to a stop and the chances of having to take evasive action to avoid a crash are much higher.

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- Patience is Key to safe winter driving. Reduce your speed and leave an extended following distance.
- Check that your car is ready for winter travel. Check that your tires are properly inflated and clean snow and ice from your entire vehicle. Not only is it unsafe, it's also illegal. Additionally, if snow or ice is dislodged from your vehicle and causes injury, you could be looking at a steep penalty.
- Remember to turn your headlights on if you are using your windshield wipers. It's much harder to see other vehicles in less than ideal conditions, so make sure others can see you.
- Be familiar with your planned route of travel. Winter weather can lead to road closures, so have an alternate route in mind if needed.

### **Department of Health Tips**

The Department of Health advises residents that the best way to protect you and your family from the cold is to stay indoors. If you must go outside, be alert for frostbite and hypothermia – the two most common cold-related health problems.

Frostbite is injury to the body caused by exposure to very cold temperatures. It causes a loss of feeling and color in affected areas such as the nose, ears, cheeks, chin, fingers, or toes. Symptoms include: a white or grayish-yellow skin area; skin that feels unusually firm or waxy; and numbness. Hypothermia is caused by an unusually low body temperature. Symptoms in adults include: shivering/exhaustion; confusion/fumbling hands; memory loss/slurred speech; and drowsiness. Symptoms in infants include bright red, cold skin and very low energy. Seek immediate medical attention if you or a loved one has symptoms of hypothermia or frostbite. Infants and older people are more at risk for cold-related health problems.

“The Department of Health wants to remind Pennsylvanians to take extra steps to protect themselves during severe winter weather. Extreme cold, high winds, or heavy snow, can be hazardous if the proper precautions are not taken,” said Secretary of Health Dr. Karen Murphy. “Everyone should be aware of the increased risk of falling on snow and ice.”

If you must go outdoors be sure to bundle up with several layers of clothing, such as water-resistant coat and boots, and cover your hands and head. Shivering should not be ignored. It is the first sign that you should go inside.

Cold weather puts additional strain on the heart. If you have heart disease or high blood pressure, follow your doctor's advice about shoveling snow or performing other hard work in the extreme cold. In addition to dressing warmly, before shoveling snow warm up muscles with 10 minutes of light exercise and stretching and take rest and water breaks instead of trying to do the entire job at once.

When possible, push snow instead of lifting it. If you must lift, bend your legs and not your back.

Avoid twisting motions that can stress your back; and if you experience chest pain, shortness of breath or other symptoms of a heart attack, seek immediate medical care or call 9-1-1.