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Illinois Department of Transportation Urges Motorists to Stay off Roads

Dangerous Road Conditions Statewide; IDOT Winter Crews to Continue to Plow and Salt Roads

CHICAGO – The Illinois Department of Transportation (IDOT) announced today that it will continue to keep winter weather crews on the job as long as necessary to plow and salt to help ensure motorist safety. However, road conditions remain treacherous statewide due to the ongoing snow and motorists are advised to stay home and only travel if absolutely necessary. The majority of Illinois roads remain snow and ice covered, making travel extremely dangerous.

The National Weather Service forecasts that snow will taper off from west to east, and move out of Illinois this evening. Strong northwest winds will result in extensive blowing and drifting snow. After the storm moves through, historic cold temperatures are expected throughout Illinois with temperatures ranging from 10 to 20 below zero and wind chills ranging from 30 to 45 degrees below zero through Tuesday. In the Chicago area, historic wind chills of 40 to 50 below zero are expected late tonight into Monday afternoon and Tuesday morning.

“With whiteout conditions in many areas across Illinois, motorists should be safe and stay off the roads,” said Illinois Transportation Secretary Ann L. Schneider. “In addition to IDOT winter weather crews clearing the roadways, IDOT emergency personnel is working around the clock to assist with stranded motorists, vehicles in ditches and crashes statewide. If motorists absolutely must travel, they should use extreme caution, take it slow, buckle up and avoid distractions when behind the wheel.”

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 latest storm system as it moves into Illinois.

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:

- 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.
- Allow extra time for travel during the winter months.
- Watch out for black ice on roads that appear clear but 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.
- 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 cell phone and 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.