

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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**IDOT, ISP AND TOLLWAY ENCOURAGE MOTORISTS TO PREPARE
FOR WINTER DRIVING CONDITIONS**

***State Agencies Urge Safe Driving, Provide Preparedness Tips for
First Major Snowfall of the Season***

CHICAGO – Illinois transportation and law enforcement officials today urged motorists to prepare for winter driving conditions. The Illinois Department of Transportation (IDOT), the Illinois Tollway and the Illinois State Police (ISP) are working together to ensure the state's frontline winter crews and emergency equipment are available to respond to possible inclement weather and make travel safer and easier on Illinois' highways, tollways and major roads.

"We want all motorists to be aware of winter road conditions and encourage drivers to slow down, buckle up, and cooperate with snow plows," said Illinois Transportation Secretary Ann Schneider. "IDOT winter crews remain prepared to clear state roadways as needed, but we also ask motorists to take the necessary steps to help ensure their personal safety as well."

State agencies encouraged defensive driving in winter weather, and offered tips on how motorists can help transportation and law enforcement workers road ensure safety.

"We have been preparing for this winter season for many months and are ready to put our plans into action, now that the first major snowfall is on its way," said Illinois Tollway Executive Director Kristi Lafleur. "While Tollway crews work to clear snow and ice from our roadways, we ask that our customers drive carefully and give snowplow drivers room to do their job safely and effectively."

In addition, ISP has coordinated road safety plans with the Illinois Tollway and IDOT to ensure traffic enforcement priorities include safe driving, safe roads and safe access for all citizens during the winter months.

"Winter driving conditions can be hazardous on first responders and motorists. We are reminding the motoring public that when accidents occur and conditions are extreme, exchanging insurance and driver information are advised to keep motorists safe and roads clear, unless medical attention is required," said ISP Director Hiram Grau.

Motorists can file accident reports at the nearest State Police District within seven business days. To help keep state routes clear and passable, IDOT has more than 400,000 tons of salt, 3,600 employees and 1,700 pieces of equipment prepared for deployment to cover over 43,000 lane miles statewide.

The Illinois Tollway also has more than 80,000 tons of salt, 41,000 gallons of anti-icing materials and 7,000 tons of roadway abrasives, as well as more than 400 employees and its full fleet of 183 snowplows prepared for the 286-mile system of roads serving 12 counties in Northern Illinois.

In addition, the Illinois Emergency Management Agency (IEMA) recently kicked off its annual Preparedness Campaign. Helpful information on severe winter weather and disaster preparedness is available on the Ready Illinois website: www.Ready.Illinois.gov

Winter Weather Travel Safety Tips include:

- **Watch out for black ice 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.
- **Always keep your gas tank at least two-thirds full** to help prevent the vehicle's fuel line from freezing.
- **Do not travel 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 always wear a safety belt.**
- **Dress warmly** for the weather—dress in layers of loose-fitting, lightweight clothing in anticipation of unexpected winter weather emergencies.
- **Make sure someone is aware of your travel route.**
- **Clear snow and ice from all windows, mirrors and lights on your vehicle before you drive.** Blowing snow can significantly diminish visibility. Clearing all snow before you begin driving assures maximum vision of your surroundings and assists in reducing ice and snow buildup as you drive.
- **Adjust speed to road conditions and traffic around you.** Reducing speed during inclement weather conditions increases your ability to respond to the unexpected.
- **Increase the interval between your vehicle and the one in front of you.** By creating more distance between your vehicle and others, you decrease your chances of a collision because stopping distances increase as pavement conditions deteriorate.
- **Avoid unnecessary lane changes.** . During heavy snowstorms, slush and packed snow build up in the area between traffic lanes. Abrupt or frequent lane changes may cause your vehicle to slide on the buildup and spin out of control.
- **Keep away from snowplows.** Should you encounter snowplows, the safest choice is to keep back and let them do their job. They travel at a speed of approximately 30 mph, so traffic delays should be expected. During periods of extremely heavy snow, Illinois Tollway snowplows will work in tandem to remove as much ice, slush and snow as possible from all lanes at once.

- **Do not use the shoulder of the road to pass a snowplow.** Some snowplows are equipped with wing plows that extend to the left or right of the vehicle. While these wings allow for more efficient removal of snow, they are nearly invisible to passing motorists due to blowing snow. De-icing materials spread from the rear of the truck may also be a distraction to motorists attempting to pass.
- **Reduce speed in cash lanes at toll plazas.** Drivers paying cash at mainline toll plazas or traveling on ramps should adjust their speed on approach during snow and ice storms. Watch for lane designations on approach to the toll plaza; switching lanes close to the toll plaza is unsafe, especially during winter weather.
- **Call *999 for Tollway road assistance.** Should you encounter car trouble and require roadway assistance, try to move your car to a safe position on the shoulder or in an untraveled area. Report stranded vehicles by dialing *999 from a cellular phone.
- **Stay in your vehicle, H.E.L.P. is on the way.** During continued periods of extremely cold weather, the Illinois Tollway operates a “Zero Patrol” to supplement the Illinois State Police District 15 and the Tollway’s Highway Emergency Lane Patrol (H.E.L.P.) vehicles. These patrols enable us to cover the entire 286-mile Tollway system 24 hours per day when temperatures and wind chills are at or below zero. Stay in your vehicle – it’s the safest place to be if you are stranded.
- **The Illinois Tollway operates a toll-free telephone line** to keep customers up to date about weather conditions on its roadways. Customers can call 1-800-TOLL-FYI (1-800-865-5394) to get recorded information that is updated every two hours or as conditions require during winter storms.
- **The Tollway’s Traffic and Incident Management System (TIMS)** provides real-time travel times via the Illinois Tollway’s website www.illinoistollway.com .