



NEWS

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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ILLINOIS TOLLWAY PREPARED FOR FRIDAY SNOWFALL

Full Fleet of Snowplows Ready for Deployment; Snow Operations Center Will Be Activated

DOWNERS GROVE, IL – The Illinois Tollway is preparing to mobilize its full fleet of 183 snowplows in response to the snowfall expected to begin on Friday and continue into Saturday morning, making travel safer and easier for customers on the 286-mile system of roads serving 12 counties in Northern Illinois.

“The Illinois Tollway is ready to put our snow removal plans into action as soon as the snow hits the pavement,” said Illinois Tollway Executive Director Kristi Lafleur. “The safety of our customers is our top priority, and we are well-prepared to respond to the snowfall expected throughout the day tomorrow.”

The Illinois Tollway’s Snow Operations Center will open in the early hours on Friday morning, January 20, and the Tollway will have a full complement of more than 200 staff and supervisors per shift to ensure that roadways are kept clear of snow and ice. To help with snow removal efforts, the Tollway has cancelled all temporary lane closures from 7 a.m. on Friday, January 20, to 7 a.m. on Saturday, January 21.

For this weather event, the Tollway is offering the following travel tips:

- **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.
- **Reduce speed on ramps and in cash lanes at toll plazas.** Drivers paying cash at 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.
- **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.
- **Call *999 for roadway 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.

“We want to make sure that our roads are clear so that customers arrive at their destinations safely,” said Lafleur. “Drivers can do their part by being patient, keeping a safe distance from other vehicles and reducing their speed.”

In addition to working to keep roads free of snow and ice, the Illinois Tollway also is helping to provide drivers with additional information to help them reach their destinations safely during winter weather events.

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.

In addition, the Tollway’s Traffic and Incident Management System (TIMS) provides real-time travel times and roadway conditions via the Illinois Tollway’s website - www.illinoistollway.com and on over-the-road electronic message signs throughout the Tollway.

The Illinois Tollway also reminds customers that the seven oases located along the Tollway system also serve as statewide warming centers. On the Tri-State Tollway (I-94/I-294/I-80), there are four oases: Lake Forest, O’Hare, Hinsdale and Chicago Southland Lincoln in South Holland. There are two oases on the Jane Addams Memorial Tollway (I-90) in Belvidere and Des Plaines, and one on the Reagan Memorial Tollway (I-88) in DeKalb.

How the Tollway Prepares for Winter Weather

The Illinois Tollway strives to provide customers with the highest possible level of service during winter operations. Every effort is made to act quickly with snow and ice control measures that ensure the free flow of people, goods and services regardless of winter weather conditions.

Equipment

- The Illinois Tollway uses 183 snowplow trucks to clear its roadways of snow and ice.
- The Illinois Tollway uses about 1,500 plow blades each winter season.

Materials

- The Tollway began this winter season with a supply of more than 80,000 tons of salt, 41,000 gallons of liquid calcium chloride and 7,000 tons of roadway abrasives in inventory.
- During the 2010-2011 winter season, the Illinois Tollway used 81,435 tons of salt, 20,000 gallons of liquid calcium chloride and 5,600 tons of roadway abrasives. The average salt usage per year over the last four years is 86,000 tons.
- Typical salt applications are 200 lbs. per lane mile during small storms and 500 lbs. per lane mile during heavier snowstorms or extreme icing conditions. Onboard computer controls monitor salt usage based on the speed of the truck and the amount of salt being put down.

Personnel

- The Illinois Tollway has 11 maintenance facilities, each responsible for 25-30 center lane miles and with 25-59 full-time personnel. Seven maintenance facilities are located in the Chicago metropolitan area, one in Rockford and three in rural areas.
- During a full call-out, there are 183 equipment operators, 11 mechanics, 11 clerical staff and 11 supervisors required for each of two 12-hour shifts to provide for 24-hour coverage. The Illinois Tollway's Snow Operations Center is staffed with traffic center operators and snow and ice control managers during winter weather events.
- It takes snow crews 2,047 lane miles to de-ice and plow one pass of the Illinois Tollway system during a snow and ice storm – the equivalent of driving from Chicago to Los Angeles.
- In a typical 12-hour shift, snow crews can make up to eight complete passes of the 2,047-lane mile system for a total coverage of more than 16,000 miles. In a 24-hour storm operation, this would equate to more than 32,000 miles of coverage – the equivalent of driving coast to coast across the United States 10 times.

About the Illinois Tollway

The Illinois Tollway is a user-fee system that receives no state or federal funds for maintenance and operations. The agency maintains and operates 286 miles of interstate tollways in 12 counties in Northern Illinois, including the Reagan Memorial Tollway (I-88), the Veterans Memorial Tollway (I-355), the Jane Addams Memorial Tollway (I-90) and the Tri-State Tollway (I-94/I-294/I-80).

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