



OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR
PAT QUINN

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Governor Quinn Provides Statewide Update on Response to Historic Winter Storm

Critical State Services Continue; Illinois National Guard Activated to Join Other State Emergency Responders

CHICAGO – Governor Pat Quinn today was joined by key state emergency officials to provide a comprehensive update on the state's response to the historic winter storm and freeze. As all critical and emergency state services continue, the Governor has also activated the Illinois National Guard to help emergency crews across the state provide assistance during the bitter cold and dangerous weather conditions, which have included a hazardous combination of black ice and snow drifts.

Since last week, the state has deployed nearly 3,700 employees and 1,755 trucks from the Illinois Department of Transportation (IDOT) statewide to address the winter weather on state routes, and 200 staff and 182 snow plows from the Illinois Tollway. The Tollway has doubled the number of Zero Weather Road Patrols to assist customers stranded in their cars during the severe weather. Additionally, Conservation Police Officers in snowmobiles, all-terrain vehicles and four-wheel-drive trucks are assisting stranded motorists throughout the state and helping find missing persons.

"The state of Illinois has mobilized all resources to keep residents safe while continuing to provide critical state services," Governor Quinn said. "We are facing a dangerous combination of low temperatures, black ice and snow drifts."

"I want to recognize the heroism of our state's first-responders and emergency personnel who have been working throughout the night and day to rescue motorists and provide critical services and assistance in some of the most difficult conditions imaginable," the Governor said.

Update

The Governor has been monitoring weather conditions hour by hour and has directed the state's agencies to take a number of steps in response to the heavy snow and severe cold gripping Illinois.

Yesterday, the Governor activated the State Emergency Operations Center in Springfield to coordinate the state's response to the storm. Representatives from critical safety agencies are staffing the center 24 hours a day throughout the duration of the storm and

dangerously low temperatures. As a dangerous combination of black ice and snow drifts developed overnight, Governor Quinn issued a statewide disaster declaration, which activates the state's emergency operations plan and allowed him to activate the Illinois National Guard to help state and local emergency responders with an increasing volume of calls for assistance. As conditions continued to worsen, the Governor implemented the State's Continuity of Operations/Continuity of Government Plans earlier this morning to ensure continued delivery of critical state response services during the severe winter weather conditions while protecting the state's workforce.

The Governor has also opened the state's more than 100 warming centers, including Illinois Department of Human Services offices throughout the state, which are open Monday through Friday from 8:30 a.m. to 5 p.m., or the Illinois Tollway Oases, which are open 24 hours a day. To find a warming center, call (800) 843-6154 or visit keepwarm.illinois.gov.

Heroic Emergency Responders

Stories of heroism by rescuers continue to emerge as emergency responders work around the clock to assist those impacted by the extreme weather.

Personnel from the Illinois National Guard field maintenance shop in Mattoon coordinated with Illinois State Police troopers and Illinois Department of Transportation snow plow crews to assist motorists in approximately 375 vehicles backed up on I-70 and I-57 north of Effingham Sunday evening. The backup was the result of several vehicles and semi-trucks that were stuck in snow drifts, making it impossible for snow plows to clear the route for the cars to proceed. Illinois National Guard personnel used a wrecker to pull the stranded vehicles and trucks from the road, which allowed IDOT crews to clear the road and rescue hundreds of passengers.

"The men and women of the Illinois National Guard are again demonstrating their commitment to the safety and security of Illinois citizens," Brig. Gen. Daniel M. Krumrei, the Adjutant General of the Illinois National Guard, said. "We train extensively throughout the year to be ready and on the scene to help our neighbors at a moment's notice. Within two hours of activation, our Soldiers navigated dangerous road conditions in sub-zero temperatures to rescue stranded motorists."

Conservation Police Officer Trent Reeves rescued seven people and two pets that were trapped by snow drifts along Route 47 north of Mahomet. Emergency vehicles could not reach the people, so Officer Reeves traveled by snowmobile and on foot to rescue the stranded individuals and deliver them to nearby emergency vehicles. All of those rescued, including the pets, are fine. Officer Jim Mayes assisted with the rescue, and himself used his truck to rescue six individuals who were stranded on Interstate 74 in east central Illinois.

State officials are advising people to stay safe and take the proper precautions during this weather emergency.

"With the freezing temperatures, black ice is a major concern," Illinois Transportation Secretary Ann L. Schneider said. "Black ice forms on roads that appear clear and the unseen ice can be treacherous. We encourage motorists, if they must travel, to take it slow when approaching intersections, off-ramps, bridges and shady areas – all are prone to black ice. Motorists should use extreme caution, buckle up, avoid distractions and check www.gettingaroundillinois.com for the latest winter road conditions and road closures."

“If you must drive in these dangerous conditions, be sure to stock your vehicle with emergency supplies, such as bottled water, snack foods, a flashlight, blankets, extra warm clothing, gloves, boots and other winter weather items,” Illinois Emergency Management Agency Director Jonathon Monken said. “You need to be ready to stay safe and warm if you are stranded along the road for several hours, which is a very real possibility during the current weather conditions.”

“Facing such extreme conditions, the Tollway is urging its customers to avoid driving if at all possible,” Illinois Tollway Executive Director Kristi Lafleur said. “For those who must travel, we are asking that you take proper precautions for dangerously cold temperatures and allow extra time for your trips.”

The Illinois Department of Public Health and the Office of the Illinois State Fire Marshal caution residents about the dangers of carbon monoxide poisoning. Carbon monoxide is produced whenever fuel such as gas, oil, kerosene, wood or charcoal is burned. If appliances are not working properly or are used incorrectly, dangerous levels of carbon monoxide can result. Symptoms may resemble winter flu or food poisoning, particularly in children, and include headaches, dizziness, nausea, and lethargy. Higher levels of exposure can cause fainting, marked confusion and collapse. If exposure continues, death can result. If your carbon monoxide detector alarm sounds, call 911 and leave the area immediately. Affected individuals should be led to fresh air.

To prevent carbon monoxide poisoning, do not use a gas oven to heat your home, even for a short time; do not burn anything in a stove or fireplace that is not vented; do not use gasoline-powered engines in your house, garage or other enclosed spaces; and do not use a charcoal grill, camping stove or Sterno-type fuel for cooking indoors, even in a fireplace.

The Department of Public Health also reminds people to reduce the chance of frostbite or hypothermia by staying dry and wearing several layers of lightweight clothing; covering your head; wearing mittens rather than fingered gloves; wearing warm leg coverings and heavy socks or two pairs of lightweight socks; and covering your ears and lower face.

The Illinois Department of Agriculture encourages pet-owners to keep their pets indoors or ensure they have a warm shelter area with unfrozen food and water. To protect people’s pets, they also encourage everyone to use pet-friendly salt when clearing sidewalks and driveways.

More information about Winter Storm Preparedness is available from Ready.Illinois.gov.

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