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Shapiro Administration Outlines Winter Preparations, Guidance for Public Readiness, and Employment Opportunities

Harrisburg, PA – Pennsylvania Department of Transportation (PennDOT) Secretary Mike Carroll, Pennsylvania Emergency Management Agency Director Randy Padfield, and Pennsylvania Turnpike Commission (PTC) Chief Executive Officer Mark Compton today held a media briefing to outline plans for winter services, highlight job opportunities, and discuss how the public can prepare for the season.

“The safety of every Pennsylvanian is a top priority of the Shapiro Administration. We’ve been preparing for this winter since the last one ended,” **Carroll** said. “Across Pennsylvania, the team at PennDOT is hard at work fixing our roads, highways and bridges – making it easier and safer for Pennsylvania drivers while creating good paying jobs. Keeping our roads as safe as possible is a team effort, and we’d love to have people join our team.”

The public can access travel information on nearly 40,000 state-maintained roadway miles year-round at www.511PA.com, and during the winter they can find plow-truck locations and details of when state-maintained roadways were last plowed. The information is made possible by PennDOT’s Automated Vehicle Location technology, which uses units in the over 2,600 department-owned and rented plow trucks to send a cellular signal showing a truck’s location.

To help the public prepare for the season and share information about winter services, PennDOT offers operational information and traveler resources on its [winter web page](#). The site also has a [complete winter guide](#) with detailed information about winter services in each of [PennDOT’s 11 engineering districts](#).

Each year, the PTC readies itself to confront the winter elements by properly preparing its entire fleet of trucks, plows and salt spreaders and training more than 425 licensed equipment operators so they are ready to activate 24/7 staffing this fall. Turnpike traffic and weather operations are also at the ready. The team’s focus is to fully understand the conditions on the roadway and to keep the Turnpike system as free of snow and ice as possible.

“Fall has arrived in Pennsylvania, and that means that wintry weather is not far behind,” **Compton** said. “With winter weather ahead, preparation, planning and coordination are crucial. The agencies here today have spent all year meticulously planning and preparing our crews and resources so that when the first snowflakes fall, we can properly deploy what is needed and where. We also know that your planning ahead for winter driving is critical as well. Take the time

now, if you haven't already done so, to be sure your vehicle is ready by checking your tires, wiper blades, battery and anti-freeze."

For more information check out the [Safety Keys | PA Turnpike](#).

In discussing traffic safety, Carroll announced that PennDOT is adding 15 [variable speed limit](#), or VSL, signs – which quickly reduce speed limits when visibility or roadway conditions call for lower speeds – [bringing the statewide total to 78 locations](#):

- 36 locations along I-80 in Centre, Clearfield, Clinton, and Union counties (mile marker (MM) 97-210);
- Six locations on I-80 in Clarion and Jefferson counties on the approaches to Emlenton Bridge (MM 42-45), North Fork Bridge (MM 78-81), and Kyle Lake Bridge (MM 92-95); and
- 36 locations along I-81 from I-78 to I-80 in Lebanon (five locations), Luzerne (seven locations), and Schuylkill (24 locations) counties.

VSL signs quickly reduce speed limits when visibility or roadway conditions present the need for more cautious driving. Preliminary results show this solution effectively slowed traffic 4-9 mph during winter road conditions at the 63 locations last winter. Additionally, crashes decreased by an average by 22% on I-80 in Clearfield County last winter when compared to the previous five-year average. Locations were chosen based on crash and weather data, such as frequency of wintry conditions that demand safer driving, and where crashes caused by whiteout conditions led to roadway closures of more than three hours.

While the VSLs are in place, permanent speed limit signs are covered, and the normal posted speed limit is displayed on the VSL unless visibility or winter weather conditions call for slower speeds. When speed limits are reduced, a yellow light at the top and bottom of the VSL will be flashing to ensure motorists are aware of the change.

With more than \$197 million budgeted for this winter's statewide operations, PennDOT deploys about 4,700 on-the-road workers, has more than 700,000 tons of salt on hand across the state and will take salt deliveries throughout the winter.

[PennDOT is actively seeking](#) over 700 temporary equipment operators statewide for the winter season to supplement the department's full-time staff. Details on minimum requirements, such as possession of a CDL, as well as application information, are available at www.employment.pa.gov. Through the same website, job seekers can apply for nearly 100 other non-operator winter positions such as diesel and construction equipment mechanics, welders, clerks and more.

If motorists encounter snow or ice-covered roads, they should slow down, increase their following distance and avoid distractions. Last winter in Pennsylvania, preliminary data shows that there were 135 crashes resulting in one fatality and 61 injuries on snowy, slushy or ice-covered roadways where aggressive-driving behaviors such as speeding or making careless lane changes were factors.

"Road conditions during inclement winter weather can change very quickly, making it exceptionally important to have a reliable method of receiving timely updates about hazardous weather conditions," **Padfield** said. "It's always a good idea to make sure others know your

estimated travel time, and have some basic emergency supplies in your car, like water and a phone charger, along with any specialized items needed for young children or pets.”

Padfield said it’s also important to know the difference between a weather watch and warning:

- A watch means there is increased risk of a hazardous weather event, but its occurrence, location, or timing is still uncertain. Pay attention to forecasts and plan out what you will do if/when it occurs.
- A warning means the weather event is imminent or is happening. Take immediate action to protect lives and property.

In addition, snow squalls can often produce dangerous and deadly travel hazards on otherwise clear winter days. The National Weather Service now issues “Snow Squall Warnings” which alert drivers of whiteout conditions and slippery roadways, so motorists can avoid traveling directly into these dangerous squalls.

Motorists should prepare for potential wintry weather by ensuring they have supplies in their cars before heading out: food, water, blankets, extra gloves and hats, cell phone charger, hand or foot warmers, windshield brush and scraper, and any specialized items like medications or baby and pet supplies.

For more information on PennDOT's winter preparations and additional winter-driving resources for motorists, visit [the department's winter website](#).

Motorists can check conditions on more than 40,000 roadway miles, including color-coded winter conditions on 2,900 miles, by visiting www.511PA.com. 511PA, which is free and available 24 hours a day, provides traffic delay warnings, weather forecasts, traffic speed information, and access to more than 1,000 traffic cameras.

511PA is also available through a free smartphone application for iPhone and Android devices, by calling 5-1-1, or by [following local alerts on X](#).

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