

December 17, 2020

## **Governor Cuomo Declares State of Emergency in Eighteen Counties as Winter Storm Dumps Up to Two Feet of Snow in Much of New York**

*State Disaster Emergency Declared in Albany, Broome, Chenango, Columbia, Delaware, Dutchess, Greene, Montgomery, Orange, Otsego, Rensselaer, Saratoga, Schenectady, Schoharie, Sullivan, Tioga, Ulster, and Washington Counties*

*State Police Respond to More Than 600 Accidents and Disabled Vehicles Across the State Overnight, Including Two Fatal Accidents*

*Thruway Speed Limit Reduced to 45 MPH from Syracuse to NYC; Department of Transportation Implements Advisory Speed of 45 MPH on Key Interstate Corridors*

*Empty and Tandem Tractor Trailers Bans on New York State Thruway South of Exit 24, on I-84 from the Connecticut State Line to the Pennsylvania State Line, on I-684 Between I-84 to I-287, and on Route 17 Between I-84 and I-81 Lifted as of 11 a.m.*

*Empty and Tandem Tractor Trailers Ban on all MTA Bridges and Tunnels to Be Lifted at 4 p.m.*

Governor Andrew M. Cuomo today declared a state of emergency in eighteen New York counties as a strong winter storm continued to impact much of the state, dumping more than two feet of snow across a wide swath of the state. Specifically, the counties included in the declaration are Albany, Broome, Chenango, Columbia, Delaware, Dutchess, Greene, Montgomery, Orange, Otsego, Rensselaer, Saratoga, Schenectady, Schoharie, Sullivan, Tioga, Ulster and Washington Counties. A number of travel restrictions and speed limit reductions have also been implemented by state transportation agencies. New Yorkers being advised to continue monitoring their local weather reports for updates and avoid any unnecessary travel as driving conditions remain dangerous in many parts of the state.

"With a large portion of the state continuing to deal with heavy snowfall and extremely dangerous driving conditions, I am declaring a state of emergency in eighteen counties across the Southern Tier, Mohawk Valley, Capital and Mid-Hudson Regions," **Governor Cuomo said.** "New Yorkers are no strangers to extreme winter weather and we will get through this as we always do. We have thousands of personnel and pieces of equipment engaged in operations throughout the state and will continue to do everything we can to help communities until the job is done. In the meantime, I am urging all New Yorkers to stay home and avoid any unnecessary travel so snow plows and road crews can clear roads as quickly and as safely as possible."

The speed limit on the Thruway from Exit 36 in Syracuse to the New York City line has been reduced to 45 mph, as well as on a number of other key interstate corridors including:

- I-88
- I-87 (from Exit 1 to Exit 23)
- I-90 (from Exit 24 to Berkshire Spur)
- I-787
- I-890
- Route 7 (from I-87 to Hoosick Street in Capital Region)
- I-81 (from PA line to Exit 9)
- I-84
- I-684
- All Mid-Hudson Parkways
- I-86 (I-390 to Tioga county line)
- NY 17/I-86 (Chemung county line to Orange county line)
- I-99

The bans on empty and tandem tractor trailers on the Thruway from Exit 24 in Albany to the New York City line, Interstate 84 from the Connecticut State Line to the Pennsylvania State Line, Interstate 684 from Interstate 84 to Interstate 287 and Route 17 from Interstate 84 to Interstate 81 have been lifted as of 11 a.m. Similar bans on all MTA Bridges and Tunnels will remain in place until 4 p.m.

During the overnight hours, more than two feet of snow fell across much of the state, with the Southern Tier experiencing the highest snowfall totals. Binghamton generally received 24 inches snow, while Albany received 16 inches, Kingston received 14 inches, and New York City receiving 8. The storm will continue to move out of the region today with the snow winding down by noon. Some areas are expected to receive another 4 to 8 inches of snow. Temperatures will range from the high teens to low 20s and hazardous travel conditions will persist with wind gusts topping 15 mph.

The National Weather Service has issued several advisories and watches ahead of this storm. New Yorkers are urged to stay alert and monitor local weather forecasts for changing conditions and ensure their safety by preparing their family and household for inclement weather now. For a complete listing of weather watches, warnings, advisories and latest forecasts, visit the National Weather Service [website](#).

New Yorkers are no strangers to extreme winter weather and we will get through this as we always do.

Governor Andrew M. Cuomo

## **Agency Preparations**

Department of Transportation

The Department of Transportation continues to move assets to impacted areas and is responding with 3,587 supervisors and operators. All residency locations will remain staffed for 24/7 operation throughout the duration of the event and priority cleanup

operations. All available S&I equipment is ready to deploy. Statewide equipment numbers are as follows:

- 1,613 large plow trucks
- 179 medium duty plows
- 52 tow plows
- 311 large loaders
- 38 snow blowers

To support snow and ice activities in critical areas, a total of 180 additional upstate staff, including: 164 plow truck operators, 8 equipment operator instructors, and 8 mechanics; and 4 mechanic service trucks are being deployed. They are distributed as follows:

- The Capital Region will be receiving 2 mechanics and 1 mechanic service truck
- The Mid-Hudson Region will be receiving 67 plow operators, 6 supervisors, 4 equipment operator instructors, 2 mechanics and 1 mechanic service truck
- The Southern Tier will be receiving 12 plow operators, 2 equipment operator instructors
- Long Island will be receiving 85 plow operators, 2 equipment operator instructors, 4 mechanics, 2 mechanic service trucks

#### Thruway Authority

The Thruway Authority has 682 operators and supervisors responding with 252 large snow plows, 103 medium snow plows, 11 tow plows and 62 loaders across the state with more than 125,000 tons of road salt on hand.

In addition, eight large snow plows as well as 16 operators and 6 supervisors from the Thruway's Buffalo Division, as well as one tow plow and one large blower from the Thruway's Syracuse Division have been deployed to the lower Hudson Valley region to support in snow and ice operations in areas with the highest forecasted snow totals.

Variable Message Signs, Highway Advisory Radio and social media are utilized to alert motorists of winter weather conditions on the Thruway.

The Thruway Authority encourages motorists to download its [mobile app](#) which is available for free on iPhone and Android devices. The app provides motorists direct access to real-time traffic and navigation assistance while on the go. Motorists can also sign up for [TRANSalert](#) e-mails which provide the latest traffic conditions along the Thruway [here](#).

#### Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation

New York State Park Police and park personnel are on alert and closely monitoring weather conditions and impacts. Response equipment is being fueled, tested and prepared for storm response use. The agency has six sawyer crews available for deployment. Park Police have 21 snowmobiles and four enclosed cab tracked UTVs available for deployment. Park visitors should check [parks.ny.gov](http://parks.ny.gov) or call their local park

office for the latest updates regarding park hours, openings and closings.

#### Department of Environmental Conservation

DEC Environmental Conservation Police Officers, Forest Rangers, Emergency Management staff, and regional staff are on alert and monitoring the developing situation and actively patrolling areas and infrastructure likely to be impacted by severe weather. All available assets, including snowmobiles, are positioned to assist with any emergency response.

#### Department of Public Service

New York's utilities have approximately 5,500 workers available to engage in damage assessment, response and restoration efforts across New York State. Department of Public Service staff will track the utilities' work throughout the storm event and will ensure the utilities shift the appropriate staffing to the regions anticipated to experience the greatest impact.

#### Division of Homeland Security and Emergency Services

The New York State Division of Homeland Security and Emergency Services' Emergency Operations Center remains activated due to the COVID-19 pandemic and will monitor weather conditions, coordinate state response operations and stay in contact with localities throughout the duration of the event. State Stockpiles are also prepared to deploy assets to localities to support any storm-related needs. This includes pumps, chainsaws, sandbags and bottled water. At Governor Cuomo's direction, the State Office of Fire Prevention and Control is prepositioning three tracked vehicles today in the Mid-Hudson Region to assist local partners with any necessary rescue efforts.

#### State Police

Since the storm began on Wednesday, State Police have responded to more than 600 accidents and disabled vehicles across the state, including two fatal accidents. State Police have increased staffing in the affected areas by 20 percent and are prepared to deploy additional Troopers as needed to affected areas. All State Police specialized vehicles, including four-wheel drive vehicles, snowmobiles, and Utility Task Vehicles are staged and ready for immediate response. All Troop emergency power and communications equipment has been tested.

#### Metropolitan Transportation Authority

Metropolitan Transportation Authority (MTA) personnel have worked hard through the night to ensure safe, reliable service. MTA employees continue to spread salt and clear platforms and stairs of snow and ice, keep signals, switches, and third rail operating, remove any downed trees, and attend to any weather-related challenges as a result of the storm.

MTA Bridges and Tunnels empty and tandem tractor trailer ban remains in place until 4 p.m today. The Long Island Rail Road is operating on an enhanced weekend schedule.

Customers are encouraged avoid unnecessary travel, check [mta.info](http://mta.info) for the latest service updates, and to use extreme caution while navigating the system, especially on outdoor platforms and stairs. Customers should also [sign up for real-time service alerts](#) via text or email. These alerts are also available via the MTA's apps: MYmta, Metro-North Train Time and Long Island Rail Road Train Time.

#### Port Authority

The Port Authority urges motorists to use caution during this week's winter storm; speed restrictions may be in effect at the bridges as well as along roadways to and from the crossings.

Travelers through the Port Authority's airports, bus terminal and bus station are encouraged to reach out to carriers and airlines directly for the latest information on delays, cancelations or rebookings. For the latest information about Port Authority facilities, please check social media, sign up for [PA alerts](#) or download one of the PA mobile apps.

#### New York Power Authority / Canal Corporation

The New York Power Authority and the Canal Corporation staff have performed regular preparations for winter weather in advance of the impending storm to ensure all facilities, assets and equipment are storm ready. The Power Authority also is prepared to support power restoration activities if needed.

### **Safety Tips**

#### Safe Travel

It is important for motorists on all roads to note that snowplows travel at speeds up to 35 miles per hour, which in many cases is lower than the posted speed limit, to ensure that salt being dispersed stays in the driving lanes and does not scatter off the roadways. Oftentimes on interstate highways, snowplows will operate side by side, as this is the most efficient and safe way to clear several lanes at one time.

Motorists and pedestrians should also keep in mind that snowplows travel slower than highway speeds and motorists should use caution when traveling near them. Snow blowing from behind the plow can severely reduce visibility or cause whiteout conditions. Motorists should not attempt to pass snowplows or follow too closely. The safest place for motorists to drive is well behind the snowplows where the roadway is clear and salted.

Some of the most important tips for safe winter driving include:

- When winter storms strike, do not drive unless necessary.
- If you must travel, make sure your car is stocked with survival gear like blankets, a shovel, flashlight and extra batteries, extra warm clothing, set of tire chains,

battery booster cables, quick energy foods and brightly-colored cloth to use as a distress flag.

- Keep your gas tank full to prevent gasoline freeze-up.
- If you have a cell phone or two-way radio available for your use, keep the battery charged and keep it with you whenever traveling. If you should become stranded, you will be able to call for help, advising rescuers of your location.
- Make sure someone knows your travel plans.

## Winterize Your Vehicle

Preparing your vehicle for the winter season now will help ensure your vehicle is in good working order when you need it most. Have a mechanic check the following items on your vehicle:

- Battery
- Wipers and windshield washer fluid
- Antifreeze
- Ignition system
- Thermostat
- Lights
- Exhaust system
- Flashing hazard lights
- Heater
- Brakes
- Defroster
- Oil level

Also be sure to:

- Install good winter tires. Make sure the tires have adequate tread. All-weather radials are usually adequate for most winter conditions. You may also want to carry a set of tire chains in your vehicle for heavy snow conditions.
- Keep a windshield scraper and small broom for ice and snow removal and maintain at least a half tank of gas throughout the winter season.
- Plan long trips carefully. Listen to the local media report or call law enforcement agencies for the latest road conditions.

## Drive Safely

The leading cause of injuries and death during winter storms is transportation accidents.

- Before getting behind the wheel this winter season, every driver could learn a lesson from our school bus drivers. It is elementary, but we have to keep our vehicles clear of ice and snow. Good vision is a key to good driving.

- Plan your stops and keep more distance between cars. Be extra alert. Remember, snowdrifts can hide smaller children. Moreover, always match your speed to the road and weather conditions.

If caught in the storm and are unable to continue traveling:

- Stay in your car and wait for help to find you.
- Run your engine for short periods of time to stay warm. Keep your down-wind window open and make sure your exhaust pipe is clear of snow.
- Turn on the dome light at night when you are running the engine to signal rescuers.
- Hang a brightly colored piece of cloth or piece of clothing from your car.
- Exercise from time to time by vigorously moving arms, legs, fingers and toes to keep blood circulating and to keep warm.

For more winter safety tips, please visit the New York State Division of Homeland Security and Emergency Services [website](#).