



OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR
PAT QUINN

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Governor Quinn Announces State Preparedness Measures Ahead of Winter Blast

Governor Urges Residents to Stay Inside, Safe and Warm Ahead of Forecast Snow and Cold; Check on Neighbors

CHICAGO – Governor Pat Quinn today announced measures being taken by Illinois state agencies to prepare for the extreme cold and additional snowfall that is forecast for the next several days. He also urged residents to follow recommended winter safety procedures and to check on their neighbors during the bitter cold and snowy weather. Today's announcement is part of Governor Quinn's commitment to keeping all Illinois residents safe and warm this winter.

"As we head into this extreme winter blast, state of Illinois personnel and emergency crews are working around the clock to help people stay warm and safe, while keeping roads open for those who must travel," Governor Quinn said.

"During this bitter cold and snowy weather, Illinois residents should stay inside as much as possible and limit their exposure to the cold temperatures. Don't forget to dress in layers, check in on friends and family who may need additional assistance, and bring pets indoors. Residents can also take advantage of our warming centers if necessary," the Governor added.

Residents are urged to take advantage of the state's more than 100 warming centers as temperatures dip to dangerous lows. These include 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 near you, call the IDHS hotline at (800) 843-6154 or visit keepwarm.illinois.gov.

The Illinois Department of Transportation (IDOT) and the Illinois Tollway have their crews working around the clock to keep roads clear and passable. Motorists are urged to drive defensively and safely, travel only if absolutely necessary, slow down, and buckle up. In addition, a new state law prohibits motorists from talking on all but hands-free mobile phones while driving.

Other roadway safety tips to remember:

- Don't crowd snowplows – an operator's field of vision is restricted.
- Allow extra time for travel during the winter months.
- Watch out for black ice on roads that appear clear but can be treacherous. Slow down when approaching intersections, off-ramps, bridges and shady areas - all are prone to black ice, which is often invisible.
- Pull over and dial *999 for emergency roadway assistance.

Check travel and road conditions routinely before any trip. You can get road condition information by calling 1-800-452-IDOT (4368), Illinois Tollway information by calling 1-800-TOLL-FYI or online at www.gettingaroundillinois.com and click on the "winter road conditions" icon.

The Illinois Tollway expects to double the number of Zero Weather Road Patrols it provides around the clock to assist drivers stranded in their cars along the 286-mile Tollway system. The Zero Weather Road Patrols provide roadway assistance when temperatures and/or sustained wind chills are below zero.

The Illinois Emergency Management Agency (IEMA) will continue to monitor the winter weather conditions throughout Illinois and stands ready to activate emergency state resources if necessary. IEMA also advises every household to have a disaster preparedness kit that will help residents stay safe for at least three days. The kits should include a battery-powered NOAA weather radio, a flashlight, extra batteries, non-perishable food, water, a first-aid kit, extra medications and special items needed for babies, disabled or elderly family members and pets.

If you must travel, IEMA and IDOT recommend you equip your vehicle with an emergency supply kit to keep you safe in case you are stranded along the road. A vehicle preparedness kit should include a cell phone and charger, flashlight, extra batteries, first-aid kit, snack foods and water, blankets, extra warm clothing, gloves and hats, sand or kitty litter, shovel, windshield scraper, booster cables, flares or reflectors, windshield washer fluid, and a tool kit. Always keep your gas tank at least two-thirds full to help prevent the vehicle's fuel line from freezing.

Before you depart, check weather and road conditions along your route and provide your planned route to a family member or friend. If conditions are dangerous, postpone travel until road conditions improve. IEMA and the National Weather Service have developed a Winter Weather Preparedness Guide that contains many more tips about winter weather safety. The guide is available at the Ready Illinois website at ready.illinois.gov.

The Illinois Department of Public Health (IDPH) advises residents to be vigilant regarding two health conditions caused by cold winter weather that can lead to serious injury or death – hypothermia and frostbite. Infants and the elderly are particularly at risk for these conditions.

Symptoms for hypothermia, a drop in body temperature to 95 degrees Fahrenheit or lower, include forgetfulness; drowsiness; slurred speech; change in appearance, such as a puffy face; weak pulse, slow heartbeat; very slow, shallow breathing; and in extreme cases, coma or a death-like appearance. If you notice these symptoms, wrap the person in a warm blanket and seek immediate medical attention. Do not give a hypothermia victim a hot shower or bath.

Frostbite typically affects exposed areas of the face, ears, wrists, hands and feet. Frostbitten skin is whitish and stiff, and the area will feel numb rather than painful. If you notice these signs, warm the affected part of the body gradually with blankets, other warm wrappings or warm parts of your body like your armpits, and seek medical attention immediately. Do not rub frostbitten areas. To reduce the chance of frostbite, stay dry and wear several layers of lightweight clothing; cover your head; wear mittens rather than fingered gloves; wear warm leg coverings and heavy socks or two pairs of lightweight socks; and cover your ears and lower face.

The Illinois Department on Aging is encouraging relatives and friends to make daily visits or calls to senior citizens living alone. Older people are more susceptible to the cold, so seniors should set their thermostats above 65 degrees. Those particularly vulnerable are older people who take certain medications, drink alcohol, lack proper nutrition, or who have conditions such as arthritis, stroke, Alzheimer's disease and Parkinson's disease.

Tips for senior citizens to best handle cold temperatures:

- Dress in layers, both indoors and outdoors.
- Keep active. Make a list of exercises and activities to do indoors when you can't get out.
- Eat well and drink 10 glasses of water daily; stock up on non-perishable food supplies, just in case.
- Keep extra medications in the house. If this is not possible, make arrangements to have someone pick up and deliver your medications.
- Do not shovel snow or walk in deep snow. Plan now for someone else to shovel the snow. The strain from the cold and hard labor could cause a heart attack; sweating can lead to a chill and even hypothermia.

The Illinois Department of Agriculture advises residents to bring their pets indoors or ensure they have a warm shelter area with unfrozen food and water. Check frequently on any animal that remains outside.

Extreme cold temperatures are dangerous and can be deadly. Since 1995, more than 130 fatalities related to cold temperatures have occurred in Illinois, making it the second-leading cause of weather-related deaths in Illinois in the past two decades.

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