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## **VIRGINIA READY FOR SEVERE WINTER WEATHER** *VDOT, VDEM and National Weather Service want residents to prepare now*

RICHMOND — Last winter Virginians got a big reminder on how brutal – and dangerous - winter weather can be. Today several state agencies joined forces to announce their preparedness plans, provide winter safety information and urge residents to get ready now for the coming winter.

“Governor Bob McDonnell has declared Dec. 5-11 Winter Preparedness Week,” said Terrie Suit, assistant to the governor for commonwealth preparedness. “The loss of life and property during winter months can be greatly reduced if Virginians will take the time to prepare before snow or ice is even in the forecast.”

“During snow and ice storms, we will deploy every available resource to ensure that state maintained roads remain passable during winter weather,” said Sean T. Connaughton, Virginia secretary of transportation. “Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT) crews, equipment and materials stand ready.”

“Last winter’s severe weather caused power outages that shut down schools, offices and businesses,” said Marla Graff Decker, Virginia secretary of public safety. We ask Virginians to make sure they are properly prepared for winter weather, and that they have an emergency kit on hand should they lose power.”

### **VDOT Readiness**

This year, VDOT has a statewide snow removal budget of \$115.1 million, a \$21.4 million increase over last year’s budget. The commonwealth spent \$266.8 million on snow operations during the extraordinary winter of 2009-2010.

VDOT has a total of 7,519 state and hired pieces of equipment. About 48,000 tons of sand and 281,000 tons of salt, 330,000 gallons of liquid calcium chloride and 138,000 gallons of liquid magnesium chloride are in stock and will be replenished as they are used.

When snow or ice is forecast, crews will pre-treat trouble spots on interstates and other high-volume roads with anti-icing chemicals including salt brine, magnesium-chloride and calcium-chloride. These chemicals help prepare the pavement and prevent a bond from forming between the roadway and snow and ice.

VDOT's goal is to have all roads passable within 48 hours after the storm ends. Crews begin by clearing interstates, primary roads and major secondary roads that connect localities, fire stations, employment hubs, military posts, schools, hospitals and other important public facilities. Secondary roads and subdivision streets will be treated if multi-day storms hit the commonwealth, but crews will focus efforts on those roads that carry the most traffic.

A statewide network of 77 weather sensors in roadways and bridges, plus 16 mobile video data platforms, allows crews to quickly identify when and where road surfaces might be freezing.

### **VDEM TIPS**

Severe winter weather can lead to injury and death from hypothermia, heart attack, stroke and traffic crashes. The Virginia Department of Emergency Management (VDEM) urges citizens to:

**Get a kit.** Emergency supplies for winter weather include – at a minimum – these basic items: three days' food and water; a battery-powered and/or hand-crank radio with extra batteries; and a family emergency plan. After getting these supplies, add a first aid kit, medications if needed, blankets and warm clothing, supplies for special members of your household, and pet items.

**Make a plan.** Choose an out-of-town relative or friend to be your family's point of contact for emergency communications. Decide on a meeting place if your family cannot return home because of closed roads. Discuss with your family what you would do in case of severe winter weather in your area.

**Stay informed.** Before, during and after a winter storm, you should listen for up-to-date information from your local media and emergency officials. Local media will give instructions from local, state and federal agencies that cover road conditions, winter storm watches and warnings, power outages and health information. Make sure your battery-powered radio is working and you have extra batteries in case the electricity goes out.

VDOT and VDEM winter safety tips include:

- Keep space heaters at least three feet from other objects. Never leave space heaters unattended. Install a smoke detector in every bedroom and one on every level of your home. Check the batteries monthly, and replace them once a year at the same time every year.
- In case of power outages, use flashlights instead of candles for light.
- Use generators only outdoors and only in well ventilated areas.
- Make sure outdoor pets have adequate shelter, unfrozen water and food.
- If your household includes someone with special needs (one who has a disability, requires electricity to operate home medical equipment, needs to go to dialysis, etc.) call your local emergency manager to let them know where you live and what you will need during an emergency.
- Driving is most dangerous when the temperature is at or under 32° F. If the road is wet, patches of ice are possible, especially on bridges and curves. Avoid using cruise control in winter weather conditions.
- Keep a safe distance of at least five seconds behind other vehicles and trucks that are plowing the road.

- Don't pass a snowplow or spreader unless it is absolutely necessary. Treat these as you would emergency response vehicles.
- Keep an emergency winter driving kit in your car.

## RESOURCES

### **800-FOR-ROAD (800-367-7623)**

Report Virginia road hazards or ask road-related questions, 24/7.

[www.virginiadot.org](http://www.virginiadot.org)

A wealth of information on VDOT's news, projects, programs and other topics.

[www.virginiadot.org/travel/snow.asp](http://www.virginiadot.org/travel/snow.asp)

Winter travel tips, photos, video and audio clips of snow removal operations and driving tips

[www.virginiadot.org/about/emergency\\_response.asp](http://www.virginiadot.org/about/emergency_response.asp)

How VDOT prepares for emergencies and what citizens can do to prepare.

[www.511virginia.org](http://www.511virginia.org)

Provides real-time updates on traffic incidents and road conditions.

[www.ReadyVirginia.gov](http://www.ReadyVirginia.gov)

A one-stop shop for emergency preparedness tips and information.

### **Twitter**

Click on <http://www.511virginia.org/twitter.aspx?r=1> to subscribe to a regional traffic feed.

Follow [www.twitter.com/VaDOT](http://www.twitter.com/VaDOT) for news and information on VDOT projects and programs around the state.

Follow [www.twitter.com/vdem](http://www.twitter.com/vdem) for news and information about statewide emergency conditions.

### **Facebook**

Like [www.facebook.com/virginiadot](http://www.facebook.com/virginiadot) to learn about VDOT news and programs.

Like <http://www.facebook.com/pages/Richmond-VA/Virginia-Department-of-Emergency-Management/49657868065> to learn about emergency preparedness.

### **YouTube**

Visit VDOT's YouTube channel [www.youtube.com/vdotweb](http://www.youtube.com/vdotweb) for videos on snow removal and many other topics.

See VDEM's YouTube channel [www.youtube.com/VAEmergency](http://www.youtube.com/VAEmergency) for videos on preparing your family for emergencies.