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**Andrew M. Cuomo** - Governor

## Governor Cuomo Activates State Emergency Operations Center in Advance of Major Winter Storm

Albany, NY (February 7, 2013)

Governor Andrew M. Cuomo today announced that in anticipation of a major winter storm set to hit most parts of New York State tomorrow and Saturday, the State Emergency Operations Center (EOC) will be activated at 12:00 PM Friday to monitor the storm and coordinate response efforts.

"As a major winter storm approaches New York State, I have activated the Emergency Operations Center effective noon tomorrow to coordinate response efforts using all state and local resources," Governor Cuomo said. "I urge New Yorkers to closely watch local news reports for weather updates and adjust their travel plans accordingly, including avoiding non-essential travel during and directly after the storm since roads will be icy with blizzard conditions in some places."

Beginning Friday morning and lasting through Saturday afternoon, significant snow and wind are forecasted to affect the metro-New York City and Long Island areas, as well the Hudson Valley. New Yorkers could see potentially significant and prolonged transportation disruptions, power outages and other impacts. The greatest concern for the Long Island area is the possibility for high winds. Gusts of up to 50 mph are expected, which could cause downed power lines, power outages, downed trees, beach erosion, battering waves, and coastal flooding. Minor widespread coastal flooding with local, moderate coastal flooding is also expected.

Representatives from state agencies will be present at the State EOC to coordinate storm response efforts, including Office of Emergency Management, Department of Environmental Conservation, Office of Fire Prevention and Control, Office of General Services, Department of Health, Division of Military and Naval Affairs, Public Service Commission, National Grid, Division of State Police, Thruway Authority, Department of Transportation and the American Red Cross.

New York City, and Nassau and Suffolk counties report that they will activate their respective Emergency Operations Centers (EOCs) on Friday; counties in the Hudson Valley, Catskill, Capital District, and Northern New York regions continue to monitor the storm.

The Governor advises drivers to take extra caution and only travel when necessary during the storm. Some of the most important tips for safe winter driving include:

- Never follow a snowplow too closely or attempt to pass one. Remember that the highway ahead of the plow is usually snow-covered;
- Adjust speed for road conditions and maintain a safe distance from other vehicles;
- Schedule extra time for winter travel and be patient during ice and snow removal operations;
- Assume that bridge surfaces are slippery, as they freeze more quickly than road surfaces;
- Watch for black ice, which can be difficult to see but makes conditions slippery when pavement temperatures are below freezing;
- Have a cell phone handy, if possible, but do not text while driving; distracted driving is illegal and becomes even more dangerous during storm events;
- Never venture from your vehicle if snowbound;
- Equip your car with emergency supplies including sand, shovel, flares, booster cables, rope, ice scraper, portable radio, flashlight, blankets and extra warm clothes;
- Inform a responsible person of your destination, intended route, and estimated time of arrival; and
- Keep calm and do not panic in case of a vehicle breakdown, accident, or if you become snowbound.

The State has taken the following steps to ensure readiness:

### **Power:**

**National Grid:** The Governor's office has been communicating to National Grid that they need to be ready with advance preparations and response plans. Earlier today National Grid announced that it is taking a series of advance steps to prepare for an incoming storm and the outages it may cause on Long Island, including securing hundreds of extra work crews, adding Call Center personnel and arranging schedules to allow extended coverage, and preparing all restoration equipment and inventories and pre-stocking strategic locations across the Island with wires, transformers, and additional restoration equipment.

- **Public Service Commission:** PSC Chairman Garry Brown has contacted the CEOs of all the major utilities to confirm storm preparation efforts. National Grid's gas operations (Long Island and New York City) are preparing for potential coastal impacts.
- **The New York Power Authority:** NYPA's statewide generation and transmission facilities are fully prepared for the forecast winter storm. All the required resources, including personnel, equipment and vehicles, have been put in place and are available to be called upon. NYPA will coordinate with state and local emergency management agencies, as necessary. Specific preparatory actions at the various NYPA facilities include:
  - Extra personnel on shift during the storm
  - Snow removal equipment fueled up, tested and ready to be utilized
  - Emergency generators fueled and ready
  - Supplies of diesel fuel and gasoline available at sites
  - NYPA line crews are prepared for dispatch

### **Thruway Authority:**

- All equipment has been prepared for the storm including: 197 seven-ton snow plows, 142 medium-duty snow plows, 53 front end loaders, three large truck mounted snow blowers and one large front end loader mounted snow blower
- 105,989 tons of salt on hand
- Approximately 600 maintenance staff dedicated to snow and ice operations
- All 21 Highway Maintenance Sections will be fully staffed around the clock for the duration of the storm
- The Authority will be providing staff to support the activation of the State Office of Emergency Management
- Thruway's Emergency Operations Center is scheduled to be activated jointly with State Police Troop T on Friday afternoon
- Thruway's Statewide Operations Center will have additional staff to handle increased call volume typical of significant weather events
- Troop T operated ATVs and snowmobiles are prepped
- Troop T will be adding additional patrols during the storm
- Due to colder temperatures and sufficient residual salt on the pavement from recent storms widespread pavement pretreatment is not required in upstate New York. Further south where temperatures are expected to be warmer, approximately 40 miles of critical ramps along with the Tappan Zee Bridge will be pre-treated.

### **State Bridge Authority**

- The Bridge Authority has the Bear Mountain, Newford Beacon, Mid-Hudson, Kingston-Rhinecliff, and Rip Van Winkle bridges staffed 24-7 until the storm is over.
- They expect the bridges to be fully functional throughout the storm, weather permitting.
- The Bridge Authority has staged 14 large plow vehicles, 16 small plow vehicles, and other loaders and vehicles necessary to maintain continuous operations.

### **Metropolitan Transportation Authority**

- **MTA New York City Transit's Department of Subways** is mobilizing its fleet of snow and ice-busting equipment designed to keep outdoor tracks and the third rail clear of snow and ice during harsh winter weather. The fleet includes super-powered snow throwers, 10 jet-powered snow-blowers, and five specially-built de-icing cars, all designed to keep service moving. Diesel fleet trains are also being made available to clear snow from the right of way—while not carrying passengers. Forecasts of accumulating snow may also require NYC Transit to shift the storage locations of subway cars indoors. The outdoor steps at subway stations will be shoveled and salted along with the platforms on the outdoor segments of lines.
- **The Department of Buses** has and is deploying its own fleet of snow fighting equipment, including 28 salt-spreading trucks equipped with plows assigned to each depot to maintain the flow of buses. They work in cooperation with the Department of Sanitation to keep bus routes clear and passable. Buses will be equipped when necessary with weather-appropriate tire chains.
- **Metro-North Railroad and Long Island Rail Road** will deploy fleets of snow and ice-busting equipment to keep outdoor tracks, third rails and catenary wires clear of snow and ice during harsh winter weather. Track switches will be treated with antifreeze and switch heaters will be turned on to keep switches moving freely so trains can continue to be routed from one track to another. Outdoor steps at all commuter rail stations will be pretreated to prevent snow and ice build-up and shoveled as necessary. More than 3,000 staff will be on call, ready to operate equipment from snow blowers and chainsaws to heavy trucks and front-end loaders. Equipment includes jet engines mounted on rail cars to blow snow from tracks at high speeds.
- **MTA Bridges & Tunnels** is fitting plows onto regular maintenance trucks and salt domes are being filled with tons of deicer. The fleet also includes 45 trucks that have special ground temperature sensors, which provide information about roadway conditions on entrance and exit ramps and other areas that are not covered by embedded roadway sensors. Above-ground atmospheric sensors are also used to help gather real-time information on wind velocity, wind direction, humidity and precipitation via wireless communication. In addition, the scheduled weekend-long closure at the Queens Midtown Tunnel for post-Sandy construction work has been cancelled due to the impending storm. In addition, Bridges and Tunnels has on hand:
  - Nearly 7,500 tons of deicer on hand;
  - Fleet of 98 snow and ice-fighting vehicles;

- Fleet comprised of vehicles that do double-duty, serving as regular maintenance trucks during normal weather and snow plows and conveyors when in snow fighting mode;
- Some 45 vehicles equipped with ground temperature sensors that tell personnel if the roadway is in danger of freezing. The operator then spreads additional deicer where it is needed and;
- MTA crossings also have imbedded roadway sensors and above-ground atmospheric sensors that deliver real-time information on wind velocity, wind direction, humidity and precipitation. These sensors record data used to determine if speed restrictions are necessary to keep moving nearly 800,000 vehicles that use the MTA's 7 bridges and 2 tunnels daily.
- Some 175 additional staff on duty throughout the storm.

**Port Authority**

- The Port Authority is putting steps in place in preparation for the first major winter snowstorm of the year. The agency is deploying extra personnel at its facilities and assembling snow equipment in advance of the wintry conditions expected thit the region on Friday and intSaturday morning.
- The Port Authority will deploy additional staff at its airports, seaports, tunnels, bridges PATH system and bus terminals. Key personnel are already on notice to work overnight to monitor conditions at each of the agency's facilities.
- Preparations for the approaching storm include fueling all vehicles, ensuring fully stocked salt supplies, and having snowplows, shovels and other snow equipment at the ready. The Port Authority's winter weather arsenal includes:
  - More than 200 snow and ice equipment at its airports, including melters that can liquefy up to 500 tons of snow an hour and plows that can clear snow at 40 mph;
  - Approximately 60 pieces of snow equipment at the bridges and tunnels, including 28 trucks equipped with plows and spreaders at the George Washington Bridge, the world's busiest vehicular crossing;
  - More than 2,000 tons of salt and more than 1,500 tons of sand for airport roads and parking lots, plus more than 2,000 tons of salt for the bridges and tunnels, specifically 500 tons of salt at the George Washington Bridge and 200 tons at the Holland Tunnel;
  - Approximately 300,000 gallons of liquid anti-icer chemicals at the airports, which prevent snow and ice from bonding to runways and taxiways, plus approximately 1,700 tons of solid de-icers, which break up snow and ice already on the ground;
  - Plow-equipped trains, liquid snow-melting agent trains and a "jet engine" plow tremove snow from tracks, and snow blowers. Plows and spreaders to clear station entrances, roads that serve PATH's 13 stations, and various support facilities; and
  - Approximately 1,000 staff members and contractors with years of specialized training and professional experience in handling severe winter weather at transportation facilities.
- The Port Authority urges travelers to check with their carriers before going to the airport or bus terminals to confirm departure times. The agency also may impose speed restrictions on its crossings if weather conditions warrant.

**Department of Transportation:**

- NYSDOT has more than 1,270 plow trucks and 1,582 drivers standing by to pre-treat roadways with salt brine in advance of the storm and clear snow and ice once precipitation begins.
- NYSDOT also has 366,500 tons of road salt on hand.
- Travelers are encouraged to check conditions before venturing out by accessing NYSDOT's free 511 NY traffic and travel information system, which provides real-time travel information, by calling 511 or visiting [www.511NY.org](http://www.511NY.org). The website features a winter travel advisory system, with real-time travel reports and a color-coded map indicating which state roads are snow covered, ice covered, wet, dry, or closed to help drivers determine if travel is advisable. The system provides real-time snow and ice conditions for interstates and other heavily traveled roads, as reported by snowplow operators.

**State Police**

- The New York State Police have a full complement of troopers and supervisors assigned tall shifts in preparation of a winter storm approaching the region. Commercial Vehicle Enforcement Unit and Traffic Incident Management team members will be used to supplement normal patrol coverage.
- State Police are working closely and coordinating with local County Emergency Operations Centers across the state as needed and are prepared for the potential increase in service calls for evacuations and medical emergencies.

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