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Andrew M. Cuomo - Governor

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Governor Cuomo Activates State Emergency Operations Center to Monitor Winter Storm, Freezing Temperatures

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Storm Expected to Create Difficult Travel Conditions and Sub-Zero Temperatures across the State

Albany, NY (January 1, 2014)

Governor Andrew M. Cuomo will activate the State Emergency Operations Center (EOC) tomorrow at 10:00 a.m. to monitor a potent winter storm that is forecasted to impact New York State Thursday and Friday. This storm will likely produce moderate to heavy snowfall across a large portion of the state, and may also result in coastal flooding and beach erosion. This system will also add to the bitter cold already being experienced statewide. There is a windchill watch for the southern and western Adirondacks with values from -30 to -40 degrees on Thursday and Friday.

The Governor is also encouraging drivers to utilize mass transit tomorrow as there may be closures of major highways across the state including, the NYS Thruway I-87, Interstate 84, Interstate 684 and the Long Island Expressway.

"Knowing the potential impact of this winter storm, combined with plummeting temperatures, I have activated the Emergency Operations Center to coordinate response efforts," said Governor Cuomo. "Blowing, drifting snow can make travel difficult and dangerous, so I urge citizens to exercise caution if they have to leave their homes. We recommend that everyone in potentially affected areas utilize mass transit and take steps to safeguard against frigid temperatures. Keep a close eye on the weather, follow any instructions issued by local emergency officials, and check on your neighbors and family members."

Audio from the Governor's winter storm briefing conference call that took place earlier this afternoon is attached.

The forecast in the Capital Region is for a moderate to significant snowfall Wednesday night into Friday with the bulk of the snow expected Thursday and Thursday night. Average snowfall amounts for the region are expected to be 6 to 10 inches. Cold temperatures ranging from single digits to mid-teens are expected with most locations expected to be below zero Friday night into Saturday night. Winds 8-14 mph expected with wind chills below -5 to -20 degrees.

A Winter Storm Warning in effect in Central New York from Thursday at 10:00am until Friday at 10:00am for Broome, Chemung, Chenango, Cortland, Delaware, Madison, Oneida, Onondaga, Otsego, Schuyler, Seneca, Southern Cayuga, Steuben, Sullivan, Tioga, Tompkins and Yates Counties. Total snowfall accumulations of 6 to 12 inches are forecast. Wind chill values are expected to drop as low as -25 degrees late Thursday night and Friday morning.

A Winter Storm Warning in effect in Western New York until Friday at 6:00am for Allegany, Cayuga, Livingston, Monroe, Ontario and Wayne Counties. Total snowfall accumulations of 7 to 14 inches are forecast. Wind chill values are expected to drop as low as -25 degrees late Thursday night and Friday morning.

A Winter Storm Warning in effect from Thursday at 6:00pm until Friday at 1:00pm for Bronx, Kings, New York, Queens, Richmond and Southern Westchester Counties. Total snowfall accumulations of 6 to 8 inches are forecast. Sustained winds of 15 to 25mph with gusts to 35 mph are forecast.

The National Weather Service has issued a Blizzard Warning in effect from Thursday at 6:00pm until Friday at 1:00pm for Nassau and Suffolk

Counties. Total snowfall accumulations of 6-10 inches are forecast. Sustained winds of 25 to 35mph with gusts to 45 mph are forecast. In addition, a Winter Storm Warning is in effect from Thursday at 4:00am until Friday at 1:00pm for Orange, Putnam, Rockland and Westchester Counties. Total snowfall accumulations of 6-10 inches are forecast. Sustained winds of 15 to 25mph with gusts to 35 mph are forecast.

Representatives from State agencies will staff the EOC to help coordinate the State's response, including the New York Division of Military and Naval Affairs, the State Police, the Department of Environment and Conservation, the Department of Transportation, the Public Service Commission and the Thruway Authority.

Jerome M. Hauer, Commissioner, New York State Division of Homeland Security and Emergency Services said, "The DHSES EOC will monitor closely the impact of this winter storm and help deploy the necessary resources to the areas of the state that require any additional assistance."

The New York State Department of Transportation has plows available statewide to clear snow and treat roads with salt and is sending additional plows to assist with snow operations in Long Island. NYSDOT crews in will be out before the storm pre-treating the roads with salt to help slow ice and snow buildup. In addition, NYSDOT has private contractors on standby with additional equipment and personnel to be deployed as necessary.

DEC staff are monitoring the state's stream gage network to track storm impacts on stream levels, and are in contact with local partners to ensure all flood control projects are ready for operation, if needed. DEC is also prepared to activate and operate state flood control projects if stream levels rise to the critical levels and will notify county emergency coordinators if this action becomes necessary.

MTA services on subways, busses, commuter rail and bridges and tunnels are subject to change as conditions demand. For more information, see the MTA's Winter Weather Travel Guide at <http://web.mta.info/service/ColdWeather.htm>.

Electric system engineers with the New York State Public Service Commission today conducted detailed pre-storm briefings with the leaders of the NYPA, LIPA, and the other major NY State utilities. All NY State utilities are on high alert and are prepared in accordance with their emergency response plans.

NYPA has taken the necessary measures to ensure that all necessary resources, such as snow removal equipment and backup emergency generators, are in place.

No weather-related operational concerns (generation or transmission) are expected for this forecasted winter storm. This storm is not expected to impact NYPA's statewide generation or transmission assets.

NYPA will continue to monitor the storm, and coordinate with state and local emergency management agencies, as necessary. NYPA's facilities are designed for and experience winter storms regularly. NYPA's operating plants, transmission system and operational staff are prepared for the predicted weather event. Corporate coordination with operating facilities continues, support staff will be available if necessary throughout the course of the weather event.

In general, all resources required (personnel, equipment, vehicles, etc.) for safe, efficient operations, have been put in place, or are available.

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;
- Be wary of 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.

NYSDOT provides a travel advisory system that features real-time travel reports and can be accessed by phone at 511 or onlineatwww.511ny.org. The Web site features a color-coded map indicating which state roads are snow covered, ice covered, wet, dry, or closed to help travelers 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.

Thruway travelers can find real-time traffic and road condition updates at www.Thruway.ny.gov, can sign up for TRANSAalert emails at <http://www.thruway.ny.gov/tas/index.shtml>, or follow @ThruwayTraffic on Twitter. Also for more information and to sign up for free alerts about hazardous travel conditions in your area, go to www.nyalert.gov.

Thruway travelers can also find useful information on the Highway Advisory Radio (HAR) stations which broadcast traffic advisories, road conditions, and safety tips 24-hours-a-day. HAR frequencies can be found at <http://www.thruway.ny.gov/travelers/har/index.html>.

Governor Cuomo also offered the following safety tips, particularly with the forecasted sub-zero temperatures:

Generator Safety

Electric generators can provide you with piece of mind and convenience when there is a temporary loss of electric service during cold weather. Be aware that fire hazards are greatly increased in the winter because alternate heating sources often are used without following proper safety precautions.

Follow these safety guidelines when operating a generator:

Before installing a generator, be sure to properly disconnect from your utility electrical service. If possible, have your generator installed by a qualified electrician.

Run generators outside, downwind of structures. NEVER run a generator indoors. Deadly carbon monoxide gas from the generators exhaust can spread throughout enclosed spaces.

Install a carbon monoxide detector.

Fuel spilled on a hot generator can cause an explosion. If your generator has a detachable fuel tank remove it before refilling. If this is not possible, shut off the generator and let it cool before refilling.

Do not exceed the rated capacity of your generator. Most small, home-use portable generators produce 350 to 12,000 watts of power.

Overloading your generator can damage it and the appliances connected to it, and may cause a fire.

Always follow manufacturer's instructions.

Keep children away from generators at all times.

Carbon Monoxide Safety

Carbon monoxide poisoning is a silent, deadly killer claiming about 1,000 lives each year in the United States. Such common items as automotive exhaust, home heating systems and obstructed chimneys can produce the colorless, odorless gas. The gas can also be produced by poorly vented generators, kerosene heaters, gas grills and other items used for cooking and heating when used improperly during the winter months.

NEVER run generators indoors. Open a window slightly when using a kerosene heater.

NEVER use charcoal to cook indoors.

NEVER use a gas oven to heat your home.

Symptoms of carbon monoxide poisoning include sleepiness, headaches and dizziness.

If you suspect carbon monoxide poisoning, ventilate the area and get to a hospital.

Prevent Water Pipes from Freezing

To prevent frozen water pipes, follow these tips:

Wrap pipes in insulation or layers of old newspapers – cover the newspapers with plastic to keep out moisture.

Let faucets drip a little to avoid freezing. Let hot and cold water trickle at night from a faucet on an outside wall.

Teach family members how to shut off water valves.

Open cabinet doors to allow more heat to get to un-insulated pipes under a sink or appliance near an outer wall.

Make sure heat is left on and set no lower than 55 degrees.

If you plan to be away:

- Have someone check your house daily to make sure the heat is still on to prevent freezing, or;
- Drain and shut off the water system (except indoor sprinkler systems).

If Pipes Freeze

Make sure you and your family knows how to shut off the water, in case pipes burst.

Stopping the water flow minimizes the damage to your home. Call a plumber and contact your insurance agent.

NEVER try to thaw a pipe with an open flame or torch.

Always be careful of the potential for electric shock in and around standing water.

If You Lose Power

If you lose electrical service during the winter, follow these tips:

First, call your utility to determine area repair schedules.

Turn off or unplug lights and appliances to prevent a circuit overload when service is restored. Leave one light on to indicate when power has been restored.

If heat goes out during a winter storm, keep warm by closing off rooms you do not need.

Alternative Heating Safety Tips

Use only safe sources of alternative heat such as a fireplace, small well-vented wood or coal stove or portable space heaters. Always follow manufacturer's instructions.

When using alternative heat sources such as a fireplace, woodstove, etc. always make sure you have proper ventilation. Keep curtains, towels and potholders away from hot surfaces.

Have a fire extinguisher and smoke detectors – and make sure they work.

If you use kerosene heaters to supplement your regular heating fuel, or as an emergency source of heat, follow these safety tips:

- Follow the manufacturer's instructions.
- Use only the correct fuel for your unit.
- Refuel outdoors ONLY and only when the unit is cool.
- Keep the heater at least three feet away from furniture and other flammable objects.
- When using the heater, use fire safeguards and ventilate properly.

Outdoor Safety

When venturing outdoors, wear loose, lightweight, warm clothing in several layers. Trapped air between the layers acts as an insulator.

Layers can be removed to avoid perspiration and subsequent chill.

Outer garments should be tightly woven, water repellent and hooded.

Always wear a hat or cap on your head – half of the body's heat can be lost because of an uncovered head.

Cover your mouth with a scarf to protect your lungs from extreme cold.

Mittens, snug at the wrist, are better than gloves because fingers maintain more warmth when they touch each other.

Cold temperatures put an extra strain on your heart. Heavy exertion, such as shoveling snow, clearing debris or pushing a car, can increase the risk of a heart attack. Stay warm, dress warm and SLOW DOWN when working outdoors. Take frequent rests to avoid over exertion. If you feel chest pain -- STOP and seek help immediately.

For more information, and a list of essential emergency safety items to keep in your home, visit the New York State Department of Homeland Security and Emergency Services winter safety page at <http://www.dhses.ny.gov/oem/safety-info/publicsafety/winter.cfm>.

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