



PRESS RELEASE

For Immediate Release:

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Hurricane Matthew

BRIDGE CLOSINGS IN COASTAL GEORGIA; EVACUATIONS ONGOING

ATLANTA—In preparation for the anticipated arrival of Hurricane Matthew, Governor Nathan Deal yesterday issued a mandatory evacuation of six coastal Georgia counties and low lying areas east of I-95, and a voluntary evacuation of 24 counties.

Bridge closings.

In addition, for public safety reasons due to anticipated gale-force winds, Georgia DOT is closing two area bridges today (Friday) until further notice. The Sidney Lanier Bridge on SR 25 in Brunswick-Glynn County closed at 10 am; the Talmadge Memorial Bridge (US 17) in Savannah-Chatham County will close at noon. After the storm, the bridges will be inspected for safety and an announcement will be made about when they will reopen.

I-16 from Savannah to Dublin is westbound only.

Georgia Department of Transportation (Georgia DOT) continues to work with Georgia Emergency Management & Homeland Security Agency (GEMHSA) and Georgia State Patrol (GSP) to contraflow Interstate 16 from Savannah through US 441 in Dublin to allow evacuation traffic to use all four lanes for travel in the westbound direction. Georgia DOT Highway Emergency Response Operators and GSP formed 13 strike teams to facilitate the evacuation process, which began Thursday.

What you need to know about the contraflow process:

1. Barricade is in place on I-16 eastbound at SR 26 in Laurens to allow evacuation traffic to use all four lanes going westbound.
2. A median crossover on I-16 east of I-95 crosses traffic onto I-16 eastbound lanes to travel westbound. A cross-over on I-16 at SR 26 (MP 38) in Laurens County directs traffic back to regular westbound lanes prior to arrival in Macon.
3. All eastbound access at interchanges is blocked from Dublin to Savannah.
4. Motorists traveling westbound (on what are normally eastbound lanes) may exit contraflow lanes at designated interchanges at:
 - Exit 143 @ SR 30 / US 280
 - Exit 116 @ SR 73 / US 301
 - Exit 104 @SR 23 / SR 21
 - Exit 90 @ SR 4 / US 1

- Exit 71 @SR 15 / SR 78
- Exit 67 @ SR 29
- Exit 51 @ SR 31 / US 319 / US 441

All other exits are closed within the contraflow section.

5. All westbound exits are open
6. Please obey law enforcement staged along the evacuation route to assist you.

Motorists are also encouraged to use evacuation routes:

- In the St Mary/Brunswick area; to travel inland, take evacuation route SR 520/US 82 west to I-75
- For coastal Georgia areas, take westerly evacuation routes such as:
 - SR 32 west to I-75 North
 - SR 520 west to I-75 North
 - SR 341 to McRae to US 441 North to I-16
- Regions including Clinch, Ware, Pierce, Atkinson, Bacon counties:
 - Take evacuation route SR 520/US 82 west to I-75
 - SR 32 west to I-75 North
- Regions including Lowndes, Brooks counties:
 - Take I-75 North
- Regions including Colquitt, Tift, Turner counties:
 - SR 520 west to I-75 North
 - Take I-75 North
- To avoid heavy traffic in the Macon area, use I-16 west to I-75 south to I-475. The exit ramp from I-16 westbound to I-75 northbound has been converted to two lanes to accommodate evacuating traffic.

For contraflow details and evacuation maps, visit Georgia DOT’s hurricane page at www.dot.ga.gov/DS/Emergency/Hurricane.

As Georgia DOT readies for the hurricane, the traveling public’s safety is a top priority. Maintaining roads and bridges are essential before, during and after the storm, with a primary focus on interstates and state routes.

After the storm:

Statewide, 795 Georgia DOT personnel are prepared to activate and deploy to address residual damage from Hurricane Matthew. After the storm, once power companies have addressed downed lines, water has receded, bridges have been inspected and it is safe to enter damaged areas, Georgia DOT crews will remove trees and clear roadways. In the event of a bridge closing, GDOT crews must wait until waters recede before they can safely inspect the bridge. Motorists should avoid downed power lines, do not drive through flood waters; do not drive around barricades that are in place for safety; and to a treat non-operational signal as a four-way stop. Please obey law enforcement personnel; and be patient with the process.

“We urge motorists to pay attention to warnings and advisories to stay off the roads due to the potential for flash flooding and downed trees,” said GDOT’s Maintenance Engineer Dale

Brantley. “Our crews will work quickly to remove any dangers from the roadway, but we need to be able to get to trouble spots quickly.”

Motorists are reminded of the hazards of being on the roads during inclement weather that potentially includes high winds, flash flooding, the possibility of downed trees and possible road and bridge closures. If motorists see flash flooding, trees down or other obstructions on roadways or bridges impeding travel, they are urged to call 511 and speak with an operator to report the incident.

The public should monitor local radio and TV stations for the latest details on weather conditions and possible evacuations. For more information:

- GEMHSA.ga.gov for emergency information
- Dot.ga.gov for roadway information
- 511ga.org or call 511 for roadway conditions or to report roadway conditions
- Redcross.org for shelter information
- GPBnews.org for news alerts and information about evacuation routes and shelter information throughout the state
- Overhead changeable message signs and electronic billboards will provide up to the minute information

For real-time road conditions, call 511 or visit www.511ga.org. For weather information, visit the National Weather Service in Tallahassee, Florida at <http://www.srh.noaa.gov/tlh/>, or the National Weather Service in Peachtree City, Georgia at <http://www.srh.noaa.gov/ffc/>.

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