



For Immediate Release:
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Icy Roadways, Light Snow Possible Thursday & Friday; Motorists Urged To Monitor Conditions in Advance

ATLANTA, Ga. – With weather forecasts for the next 48 hours indicating snow and ice likely for areas of North Georgia and possible black ice accumulations on roadways as far south as Columbus, Georgia Department of Transportation officials are urging the public to plan ahead before travelling from Thursday afternoon through Friday morning.

“We are continuously monitoring current weather conditions and forecasts as snow flurries and high winds are predicted for North Georgia. Weather forecasts indicate snow, black ice, fallen trees and damaged traffic signals are possible from Thursday evening through Friday morning. Before you head out on the roads tomorrow, please check the weather and road conditions,” said Keith Golden, Georgia DOT Commissioner. Motorists should be especially aware of potential hazardous situations:

- Bridges, as black ice forms there first and can reform quickly;
- Highest elevations in North Central and Northeast Georgia;
- Fallen trees, with root systems weakened by drought and saturated by recent heavy rains, the potential exists for strong winds to cause trees to fall onto or adjacent to roadways;
- Traffic signals not operating because of power outages; and
- High profile vehicles, as they can be difficult to control in high winds.

“Winds gusts up to 15 miles per hour are possible and weather reports call for slight accumulations of snow in the higher elevations of the Mountains. We encourage all motorists to stay off the roadways if possible. If you must be on the roads, please slow down, engage the lower gear of your vehicle for additional traction and use extreme caution particularly as you approach bridges. If you approach a traffic signal that is dark with no color lit then treat the intersection as a four way stop by waiting your turn to move. If the signal flashes yellow then cautiously proceed through the intersection. If the signal flashes red then stop and wait for a safe time, clear of crossing traffic, to proceed,” added Georgia DOT Operations Director Meg Pirkle.

Eleven new strategic staging areas housing salt and stone are located along Georgia’s interstates and will allow more focus and a more continual response on keeping two lanes interstates open for use. A brine maker will use tap water and salt to create liquid salt that will be spread with the solid form of salt. “This is the first winter we have had the capability to make liquid salt. This season will be a pilot project using the liquid salt with solid salt and stone to test its effectiveness. We believe it will start the chemical process more quickly, speeding up the melting process on our roads and bridges,” concluded Ms. Pirkle.

Georgia DOT has 1,560 employees across Middle and North Georgia available if needed. Georgia DOT will monitor conditions and respond as needed. The action plan for overnight Thursday will be finalized Thursday morning. The action plan will be revised as needed based on information from local law enforcement and the National Weather Service.

General Preparedness

- The Georgia DOT maintains a staging area in most counties. These county maintenance buildings each stockpile salt, fine gravel, fuel and any supplies needed for emergencies.
- The Georgia DOT's Highway Emergency Response Operators (HEROs) will be monitoring traffic along I-85, I-75, I-20 and I-285 in the metro Atlanta area in order to assist motorists with car trouble or to help clear accidents and stalls from the roadway.
- In the metro Atlanta area, the traffic operators at the Transportation Management Center in southeast Atlanta constantly monitor the traffic cameras along the interstates looking for signs that roads are icing up and relay those locations to the maintenance office.
- Communications personnel across the state will be at the Transportation Management Center and the district offices to provide constant updates to the media.
- Communications personnel will be providing updates to the public via Facebook (<http://www.facebook.com/GeorgiaDOT>) and Twitter (<http://twitter.com/gadepthoftrans>).
- Citizens may also access roadway conditions at the Department's winter weather web site: <http://www.dot.ga.gov/winterweather>).
- We monitor all local weather reports on television and radio, in addition to receiving regularly updated weather information from national sources.

Snow and Ice Removal

- Keeping the roads safe for emergency vehicles is our first priority.
- Interstates are cleared first, and then state routes from the most heavily traveled to the least traveled.
- The most common de-icing mixture is a 3:1 ratio of small '89 stone' and sodium chloride (salt). It is effective in breaking up ice and snow until temperatures drop below 25 degrees.
- If temperatures dip below 25 degrees, calcium chloride is added to the stone/salt mixture.
- Salt brine can be used to pre-treat roadways to prevent ice from bonding to the roadway surface.
- The tandem dump trucks mounted with spreaders can carry approximately 8 to 12 tons of the de-icing mixture.
- The Georgia DOT will bring in crews and equipment from other areas of the state to help with a particularly hard-hit area whenever necessary.

Georgia DOT will continue monitoring forecasts and road conditions and crews will respond accordingly and specifically to target areas vulnerable to freezing, like hills, ramps, bridges and interchanges.

Motorists are urged to:

Slow down and stay behind the snowplows. The road behind the plow will be the safest place to drive. Allow at least ten car lengths between your vehicle and snowplows or hopper spreaders.

Do not pass. The plows are wide, and sometimes a group of trucks will work in tandem to clear snow quickly, especially on major highways.

Be particularly aware of black ice conditions on surfaces such as bridge decks and entrance and exit ramps late tomorrow night and the early hours of Friday morning.

Remember that technology helps, but only to a point. Four-wheel drive, anti-lock brakes and traction control are beneficial advancements in today's cars, trucks and SUVs, but they can't take the place of good driving habits and the need to reduce speed on snowy or icy roads.

Call 511 or visit www.georgia-navigator.com to get current information on road conditions.

Georgia 511 is a free phone service that provides real-time traffic and travel information statewide, such as traffic conditions, incidents, lane closures, and delays due to inclement weather. Callers also can transfer to operators to request assistance or report incidents 24 hours a day, seven days a week. More information is available at www.511ga.org.

Georgia DOT urges travelers to exercise caution and call 511 for updated information on roadway conditions before getting on the road during a winter weather event. Georgia 511 is a free phone service that provides real-time traffic and travel information statewide, including winter weather closures, reports of icing or other hazardous conditions on interstates and state routes. Callers also can transfer to operators to request assistance or report incidents 24 hours a day, seven days a week. More information is available at www.511ga.org. For more information on Georgia DOT, please visit www.dot.ga.gov or subscribe to our Press Release [RSS feed](#). You also may follow us on [Facebook](https://www.facebook.com/GeorgiaDOT) (www.facebook.com/GeorgiaDOT) and [Twitter](http://twitter.com/gadepofttrans) (<http://twitter.com/gadepofttrans>).

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