



# NEWS RELEASE

VirginiaDOT.org

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## VIRGINIA PREPARED FOR SEVERE WINTER WEATHER

*Virginians urged to stay put when weather gets bad*

**RICHMOND** — Ready for another season of extreme winter weather? Last winter Virginia had only five days without snow somewhere in the state. To that end the Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT) has been prepping for snow and ice since summer to ensure that state-maintained roads remain passable.

“Severe weather has become the new normal in recent years, and we urge residents and motorists to be prepared for rapidly changing weather conditions. Have a plan. And most importantly, be where you need to be before the weather gets bad,” said VDOT Commissioner Greg Whirley.

### *VDOT Budget, Equipment, Materials*

This year, VDOT has a statewide snow removal budget of \$126 million, a \$20 million increase over last year’s budget. The Commonwealth spent \$207.9 million on snow operations during the winter of 2010-2011, and \$266.8 million during the winter of 2009-2010.

<b>DISTRICT</b>	<b>EQUIPMENT</b>	<b>BUDGET</b>
Bristol	515	16,307,000
Salem	983	12,319,000
Lynchburg	584	4,735,000
Richmond	1,193	10,243,000
Hampton Roads	328	3,141,000
Fredericksburg	745	6,638,000
Culpeper	674	6,777,000
Staunton	848	10,647,000
Northern Virginia	3,224	55,132,000
<b>Statewide Total</b>	<b>9,094</b>	<b>\$125,939,000</b>

VDOT has a total of 6,729 state and hired pieces of equipment. About 91,000 tons of sand and 307,000 tons of salt, 401,000 gallons of liquid calcium chloride and 150,000 gallons of liquid magnesium chloride are in stock and will be replenished as they are used.

### ***Pre-Treating Roads***

When snow or ice is forecast, crews 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.

### ***Road priorities***

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.

(END)

## **TIPS AND RESOURCES**

### **Do NOT Travel During Winter Storms**

- Avoid unnecessary travel. If it is not a life safety issue, stay off the roads.
- The safest place during a winter storm is indoors. About 70 percent of deaths related to ice and snow occur in automobiles.
- Stay at the office an extra hour, or leave early, to avoid travel during a winter storm.
- If residents stay off the roads during a storm, transportation workers and public safety officials are better able to clear roadways and respond to emergency needs quicker.

### **Weather Changes Quickly**

- Be prepared for the worst. Be ready to spend an extra hour at the office, or leave an hour or two early, to avoid a more time consuming commute home during the height of a storm.

- Have an emergency supply kit in your office and car.

### **Listen to Local Officials**

- If local officials advise residents to stay off the roads – then stay off the roads.
- Public safety and emergency management officials, along with National Weather Service meteorologists, base travel advisories and guidance on weather forecasts. Heed their advice!
- Businesses that follow closing/delay policies from local jurisdictions or the federal Office of Personnel Management need to monitor those sources and release employees when advised.

### **Monitor the Weather**

- Listen to local radio/TV weather forecasts; monitor social media.
- Sign up for text alerts from your local government.
- Sign up for weather alerts from NOAA/National Weather Service, including RSS feeds of your forecast and weather watches/warnings.
- Purchase a NOAA weather radio for your home and office. NOAA Weather Radio is the prime alerting and critical information delivery system of the National Weather Service (NWS). NOAA Weather Radio broadcasts warnings, watches, forecasts, and other hazard information 24 hours a day.

### **Stuck In a Car or Truck**

If a **blizzard traps you in the car**, keep these guidelines in mind:

- Pull off the highway. Turn on hazard lights and hang a distress flag from the radio antenna or window.
- Make yourself visible to rescuers:
  - Turn on the dome light at night when running engine.
  - Tie a colored cloth (preferably red) to your antenna or door.
  - Raise the hood indicating trouble after snow stops falling.
- Remain in your vehicle where rescuers are most likely to find you. Do not set out on foot unless you can see a building close by where you know you can take shelter.

Be careful; distances are distorted by blowing snow. A building may seem close, but be too far to walk to in deep snow.

- Run the engine and heater about 10 minutes each hour to keep warm. When the engine is running, open an upwind window slightly for ventilation. This will protect you from possible carbon monoxide poisoning. Periodically clear snow from the exhaust pipe.
- Exercise to maintain body heat, but avoid overexertion. Vigorously move your arms, legs, fingers and toes to keep blood circulating and to keep warm.
- In extreme cold, use road maps, seat covers, and floor mats for insulation. Huddle with passengers and use your coat for a blanket.
- Take turns sleeping. One person should be awake at all times to look for rescue crews.
- Drink fluids to avoid dehydration.
- Be careful not to waste battery power. Balance electrical energy needs - the use of lights, heat, and radio - with supply.
- Turn on the inside light at night so work crews or rescuers can see you.
- If stranded in a remote area, stomp large block letters in an open area spelling out HELP or SOS and line with rocks or tree limbs to attract the attention of rescue personnel who may be surveying the area by airplane.
- Leave the car and proceed on foot - if necessary - once the blizzard passes.

## **RESOURCES**

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

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

### **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.

### **Facebook**

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

## **YouTube**

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

[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, and photos, video and audio clips of snow

[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.