

Major Winter Storm Barrels Toward Illinois, Dangerous Travel Expected

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SPRINGFIELD – The Illinois Department of Transportation is warning the public that a major winter storm is expected to create treacherous conditions starting tonight and lasting for several days, with the potential for extremely dangerous and, at times, life-threatening travel across much of the state. Throughout Illinois, periods of heavy snow, rain, ice, high winds and bitter cold should be anticipated, leading to a likelihood of whiteout conditions and roads that will be impassable in the hardest-hit regions.

“The Illinois Department of Transportation spends the entire year preparing for snow-and-ice season and is ready to respond around the clock to this significant weather event, but clearly the public needs to be prepared for the worst-case scenario and postpone all unnecessary travel,” said Illinois Transportation Secretary Omer Osman. “Always remember, during extreme weather, the safest option is to stay home. If you must be on the roads, please be prepared for the real possibility of becoming stranded if you are unable to make it to your destination. Your cooperation and patience will be essential to keeping everyone safe the next several days.”

The National Weather Service is forecasting a winter storm warning starting later today, with mixed precipitation shifting to snow this afternoon and evening, extending into the overnight hours.

In central Illinois, along the Interstate 55, 57, 70 and 72 corridors, snow totals are expected to range between 6 and 20 inches, with the highest amounts in the Springfield, Bloomington, Champaign areas and as far north as Kankakee. Because of the intensity and amounts of snow, travel is expected to be dangerous and strongly discouraged.

Across the Chicago area, trace accumulations to more than a foot of snow are predicted. Significant ice and sleet accumulations are possible in much of southern Illinois, creating extremely slippery surfaces and slick conditions. The far northwest region of the state, Rockford and the Quad Cities, are expected to miss much of the storm.

Blowing and drifting snow will create hazardous conditions Wednesday night and Thursday, with winds gusting to 30 mph. Colder air will bring subzero temperatures by Friday morning.

Due to the long duration of the storm, sustained high winds, severe cold reducing the effectiveness of materials to treat the roads, as well as the challenges of staffing a prolonged winter weather event, IDOT is advising the public to remain patient and prepare for longer travel times to persist, with snow-and-ice response and cleanup efforts potentially lasting several days.

Statewide, IDOT has available more than 1,800 trucks and equipment to plow, treat roads and respond to weather emergencies. If you encounter a plow or any maintenance vehicle during your travels, please slow down, increase your driving distance and remain patient. Do not attempt to pass – conditions in front of the plow will be worse than behind it.

“The Illinois State Police, along with our state and local partners, are tracking this storm and stand constantly ready to meet the challenges presented by these types of weather

events,” said ISP Director Brendan F. Kelly. “While we are helping motorists out of ditches and handling crashes related to this snow-and-ice storm, we want to remind the public of the Move Over Law. By slowing down and moving over, drivers are helping all first responders and stranded motorists get back home to their families safely.”

If travel is absolutely necessary:

- Drastically reduce speeds and take it slow, especially when approaching intersections, ramps, bridges and shaded areas that are prone to icing.
- Make sure your gas tank is full.
- Keep a cell phone, warm clothes, blankets, food, water, a first-aid kit, washer fluid and an ice scraper in your vehicle. Dial *999 in the Chicago area for assistance in case of emergency.
- Check the forecast and make sure someone is aware of your route and schedule.
- Reminder: Using handheld phones while driving is illegal in Illinois, unless it is an emergency.
- If you are involved in a crash or break down, remain inside your vehicle, which is your safest form of shelter. Exiting your vehicle into live traffic can have fatal consequences.
- Always wear a seat belt, whether you’re sitting in the front seat or back seat. It’s the law. Never get behind the wheel impaired.

For regular updates on statewide road conditions, visit www.gettingaroundillinois.com. You also can follow IDOT on [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#).