# Joint News Release

**Joint Public Relations Team** **12:00 a.m., December 20, 2009**

**Primary Contact: Jim Westhoff cell (302) 345-5877 -** for updates on road conditions throughout the weekend, call Jim at this number.

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## Coordinated effort continues throughout the night

*Snowfall begins to taper off, but wind surges create drifting and visibility problems*

It looks to be another long night for snow-plow operators, law enforcement officers, and emergency responders.

While the snow appears to be slowing in most parts of the state, wind speed is beginning to pick up. Drivers from Delaware Department of Transportation (DelDOT) are still working to keep the primary routes passable.

Since Governor Jack Markell declared a State of Emergency for Kent and New Castle Counties, there has been a noticeable drop in vehicles on the road. Fewer vehicles are making it easier for plows and emergency vehicles to navigate the storm. Most stores and restaurants in Kent and New Castle Counties closed in the early afternoon. According to the order, motorists are "strongly encouraged" stay off the roads.

However, there are many vehicles sitting in the medians shoulders and ditches of the Delaware's roads.

According to Delaware State Police, here are the accident totals since 12 a.m. Saturday to 6:30 p.m. Saturday:

- Sussex County: 63 property crashes, 8 injury crashes, 62 Disabled Vehicles.
- Kent County: 33 crashes, 21 Disabled Vehicles
- New Castle: 73 crashes, 15 injury crashes, 175 Disabled Vehicles

Since the start of the storm. 6,000 tons of salt has been applied.

According to the Delaware Emergency Management Agency (DEMA), the State of Emergency will remain in effect until emergency officials and agencies and departments active in responding to the nor'easter can determine the extent of effects of the storm and how long the state will be involved in response and recovery.

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With a strong nor'easter slowly exiting the state, Delaware Emergency Management officials state that the public should still be aware that when the snow stops, there are many reasons to continue to take safety precautions. Travel may still be affected by blowing snow and streets will be icy as night temperatures remain below freezing. The National Weather Service said that blowing and drifting snow could have an impact on Delaware roads through Monday.

Winds and freezing temperatures can result in damage to exposed skin. Those who need to spend time outside are urged to keep face, ears and hands covered and to dress in layers and water proof boots.

Those who must travel should have a cell phone and have an emergency supply kit in their vehicles that includes flash lights, safety lights and reflectors, water and a blanket.

Those who might be shoveling snow are reminded that stress and strenuous physical activity can increase the risk of heart attacks among those experiencing the impacts of a natural disaster. Shoveling several inches of snow can be heavy work, and those who are not used to regular strenuous activity need to be aware of the warning signs of heart attacks. While some heart attacks are sudden and intense, many start slowly with mild pain or discomfort. If you or someone you are with begins to have chest discomfort, especially with one or more of the other signs of a heart attack, call 911 right away.

Wet, heavy snow and ice can result in broken tree limbs or downed trees that may fall on power lines and lead to power outages. The public should not attempt to move debris from a power line or to move downed lines.

In your home or business, if snow or water is present anywhere near electrical circuits and electrical equipment, turn off the power at the main breaker or fuse on the service panel. Do not turn the power back on until electrical equipment has been inspected by a qualified electrician.
Never touch electrical equipment if the ground is wet, unless you are certain that the power is off.

During times of extreme cold and power outages, many use alternative methods of powering and heating their homes or businesses. Gas powered generators should never be used indoors, including in homes, garages, basements, crawl spaces and other enclosed or partially enclosed areas, even with ventilation. Opening doors and windows or using fans will not prevent carbon monoxide build-up in the home.

Use of gas-powered appliances and generators following winter storms increases the number of carbon monoxide poisoning cases and fatalities. Emergency officials caution those using alternate means to provide electricity and cooking capabilities to avoid carbon monoxide exposure that can be a silent killer after a storm. Carbon monoxide is an invisible, odorless, tasteless gas and is highly poisonous.

Also, do not burn charcoal or gas grills inside a house, garage, vehicle, tent or fireplace. Always locate the unit outdoors on a dry surface, away from doors, windows, vents and air-conditioning equipment that could allow carbon monoxide to come indoors.

Use of candles or other open flame as a light source is also to be avoided. Flash lights and battery or crank powered lanterns should be included in your emergency supplies.

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# *DelDOT Snow Facts*

**Personnel**: During significant snow or ice events, nearly **500 employees** take part in snow removal operations. This includes drivers, mechanics, dispatchers, and office personnel to handle scheduling of staff, ordering of materials, and reporting of conditions. During particularly lengthy or difficult storms, private contractors may be called upon to assist with snow removal on bus routes, along highway shoulders, on smaller development streets, and with the clearing of crossover areas.

**Equipment:** Statewide, there are 446 vehicles available for snow operations. To plow the roads and spread salt and sand, DelDOT uses heavy-duty V-plows attached to six or 10-wheeled dump trucks. Other equipment includes snow blowers, road graders and front-end loaders, which are used to clear the many different road conditions in the state system. To ensure that all equipment is in peak condition for winter weather, a thorough inspection of all snow equipment is completed every year in late October and early November.

**Materials**: An important facet of DelDOT's work is the application of salt and/or sand to road surfaces to prevent or reduce icing, and to provide traction. DelDOT primarily uses salt, along with salt/brine and salt/sand mixtures.

- Approximately **65,000 tons of salt** are stockpiled in more than 20 locations throughout the state.
- Due to constant replenishment, the stockpiles are currently full.

**Method of Operation:** Each of DelDOT's four Maintenance Districts has its own snow removal plan.

All roadways are divided into categories with primary roads and transit routes receiving first and continuous attention (I-95, Route 13, Route 1, Route 202 etc.) Only after the primary roads are open and passable, will crews move to the secondary, and later, tertiary roads.

"Passable" means that roads can be driven upon, but are not necessarily clear of snow and ice.

Changing weather conditions including freezing/thawing, additional accumulation, or drifting, may force crews to return to primary roads even after operations have started on secondary roads.

**DelDOT maintains 89 percent of all roadways in Delaware. That equals approximately 12,900 total lane miles.**

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