



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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## **Wolf Administration Outlines Winter Preparations, Guidance for Public Readiness, and Winter Employment Opportunities**

*PennDOT Expands Signage Pilot to Enhance Safety*

**Harrisburg, PA** – Pennsylvania Department of Transportation (PennDOT) Acting Deputy Secretary for Highway Administration Mike Keiser and Pennsylvania Turnpike Commission (PTC) Chief Operating Officer Craig Shuey today held a media briefing to outline plans for winter services, highlight job opportunities, and discuss how the public can prepare for the season.

Keiser also outlined a PennDOT signage pilot project that will be used on parts of Interstates 80 and 81 this winter.

“Safety is our top priority, and motorists are our partners in making this season a safe one,” Keiser said. “We also have temporary and longer-term employment opportunities and welcome people to join the team in the many types of positions available.”

The public can access travel information on nearly 40,000 state-maintained roadway miles year-round at [www.511PA.com](http://www.511PA.com), and during the winter they can find plow-truck locations and details of when state-maintained roadways were last plowed. The information is made possible by PennDOT’s Automated Vehicle Location technology, which uses units in the over 2,600 department-owned and rented plow trucks to send a cellular signal showing a truck’s location.

To help the public prepare for the season and share information about winter services, PennDOT offers operational information and traveler resources on its [winter web page](#). The site also has a [complete winter guide](#) with detailed information about winter services in each of [PennDOT’s 11 engineering districts](#).

Each year, the PTC readies itself to confront the winter elements by properly preparing its entire fleet of trucks, plows and salt spreaders and training more than 425 licensed equipment operators so they are ready to activate 24/7 staffing this fall. Turnpike traffic and weather operations are also at the ready. The team’s focus is to fully understand the conditions on the roadway and to keep the Turnpike system as free of snow and ice as possible. Motorists should take the time now to assure their vehicles are ready for winter and to know their own winter driving skills.

“Our professional crews have worked hard to prepare for the upcoming winter season, and they are ready,” said Shuey. “We ask that all travelers on the Turnpike this winter do their part to be weather-ready for winter travel. Keeping your vehicle stocked for winter with whatever you might need for your health, safety and comfort should traffic come to a stop for an extended period of time can make a big difference in cold weather. We also ask that you consider how to react to extreme white-out conditions that can occur without notice. Be prepared to slow down, don’t

panic stop, activate your hazard lights and extend your following distance to prevent dangerous multivehicle crashes.”

In discussing traffic safety, Keiser explained that as part of a signage pilot project, the department will deploy variable speed limit, or VSL, signs – which quickly reduce speed limits when visibility or roadway conditions call for lower speeds – [at 63 total locations](#):

- 21 locations along I-80 in Clearfield (mile marker (MM) 100-133) and Clinton (MM 182-193) counties;
- Six locations on I-80 in Clarion and Jefferson counties on the approaches to Emlenton Bridge (MM 42-45), North Fork Bridge (MM 78-81), and Kyle Lake Bridge (MM 92-95); and
- 36 locations along I-81 from I-78 to I-80 in Lebanon (five locations), Luzerne (seven locations), and Schuylkill (24 locations) counties.

While the VSLs are in place through April, permanent speed limit signs will be covered, and the normal posted speed limit will be displayed on the VSL unless visibility or winter weather conditions call for slower speeds. When speed limits are reduced, a yellow light at the top and bottom of the VSL will be flashing to ensure motorists are aware of the change.

Earlier this year, the program was active in 12 locations along I-80 in Clearfield County. Preliminary results show this low-cost innovative solution effectively slowed traffic when needed and reduced or eliminated crashes. Locations were chosen based on crash and weather data, such as frequent wintry conditions and where crashes caused by whiteout conditions led to roadway closures of more than three hours.

With more than \$212 million budgeted for this winter’s statewide operations, PennDOT deploys about 4,700 on-the-road workers, has more than 636,000 tons of salt on hand across the state and will take salt deliveries throughout the winter.

[PennDOT is actively seeking](#) nearly 700 temporary equipment operators statewide for the winter season to supplement the department’s full-time staff. Details on minimum requirements, such as possession of a CDL, as well as application information, are available at [www.employment.pa.gov](http://www.employment.pa.gov). Through the same website, job seekers can apply for over 100 other non-operator winter positions such as diesel and construction equipment mechanics, welders, clerks and more.

If motorists encounter snow or ice-covered roads, they should slow down, increase their following distance and avoid distractions. Last winter in Pennsylvania, preliminary statewide data shows that there were 266 crashes resulting in two fatalities and 116 injuries on snowy, slushy or ice-covered roadways where aggressive-driving behaviors such as speeding or making careless lane changes were factors.

Motorists should prepare for potential wintry weather by ensuring they have supplies in their cars before heading out: food, water, blankets, extra gloves and hats, cell phone charger, hand or foot warmers, windshield brush and scraper, and any specialized items like medications or baby and pet supplies.

In addition, snow squalls can often produce dangerous and deadly travel hazards on otherwise clear winter days. The National Weather Service now issues “Snow Squall Warnings” which alert drivers of whiteout conditions and slippery roadways, so motorists can avoid traveling directly into these dangerous squalls.

For more information on PennDOT's winter preparations and additional winter-driving resources for motorists, visit [the department's winter website](#).

Motorists can check conditions on more than 40,000 roadway miles, including color-coded winter conditions on 2,900 miles, by visiting [www.511PA.com](http://www.511PA.com). 511PA, which is free and available 24 hours a day, provides traffic delay warnings, weather forecasts, traffic speed information, and access to more than 1,000 traffic cameras.

511PA is also available through a free smartphone application for iPhone and Android devices, by calling 5-1-1, or by [following regional twitter alerts](#).

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