

Governor Baker Urges All Residents to Avoid Travel Throughout Winter Storm

Governor Charlie Baker today is urging the people of the Commonwealth to avoid non-essential travel and prepare for the upcoming winter storm, which is expected to severely impact much of Massachusetts and bring blizzard conditions. Current forecasts predict eastern Massachusetts may receive 18 to 24 inches of snow, with as much as 30 inches possible in certain areas of the South Shore, with over 12 inches in central parts of the state and lesser amounts in western Massachusetts.

Beginning Friday night, and continuing throughout the day Saturday, the storm has the potential for strong winds, heavy snow and limited visibility, as well as flooding in some areas. Forecasts also predict high snowfall rates of 2 to 4 inches per hour with strong wind gusts, creating white out conditions and poor visibility on roadways and making it hazardous for travel.

Due to the forecast, Massachusetts Department of Transportation (MassDOT) is implementing a tractor trailer travel ban on the state's interstate highways from Saturday between 6:00 a.m. through midnight for tractor trailer trucks, tandems and special permit haulers. MassDOT urges all of these large truck drivers to plan accordingly and to stay off the roads to allow MassDOT crews to work.

The Massachusetts National Guard has equipment and personnel standing by to assist the Massachusetts State Police (MSP) and local authorities with high water and stranded driver rescues if needed.

"We are actively monitoring this weekend's winter storm, and we are urging residents to stay home and to allow crews to

safely treat and clear roadways,” said Governor Baker. “We will keep the public informed, and we remind everyone to please check in on neighbors in need and to assist in keeping sidewalks and fire hydrants clear.”

“This storm has the potential for high winds and flooding in some coastal regions,” said Lt. Governor Karyn Polito. “We will continue to collaborate with state agencies and local officials as the storm progresses, and we encourage residents to ensure they are prepared.”

This storm could cause power outages throughout the state, particularly along the coast, in eastern and southeastern Massachusetts and on the Cape and Islands. Utility crews are being staged to assist in restoring power. People are reminded to stay away from any downed utility wires.

MBTA and Commuter Rail:

The MBTA has announced that service on the Green Line’s D Branch and on the Mattapan Line is suspended Saturday. Shuttle buses will replace both D Branch service and Mattapan trolleys. Additionally, ferry service between Charlestown and Long Wharf is suspended tomorrow. Many buses are expected to operate on Snow Routes as weather conditions worsen. Crews will be working to clear snow and ice and respond to incidents such as downed trees, throughout the transit system, including the Commuter Rail, and T customers are asked to use caution on platforms and at bus stops.

The Commuter Rail will operate on a regular weekend schedule for Saturday. On the Fitchburg Line, the planned bus diversion is canceled for Saturday and trains will operate between Littleton and Wachusett. MBTA and Keolis crews will be pre-positioned at key facilities and infrastructure (switches, signals, etc.) to help ensure normal operations. Switch heaters and snow jets will be activated in critical areas as snow and ice begin to accumulate Friday night to ensure normal flow of train traffic.

The MBTA's Emergency Operations Center will closely monitor rail and bus service throughout the storm and provide updates to commuters at www.mbta.com/winter. Service alerts will be posted on Twitter at @MBTA and @MBTA_CR.

Highway Safety:

MassDOT has approximately 3,900 pieces of state and vendor equipment available for snow and ice operations and this includes over 1,400 plow and spreader combos, 2,100 plows, and 460 front-end loaders. The Massachusetts Registry of Motor Vehicles has postponed road tests scheduled on Saturday, January 29 due to the storm. Massport advises travelers to check with airlines as most airlines have already postponed flights scheduled for Saturday. MassDOT urges members of the public to stay updated on reduced speed limits, tractor trailer bans and roadway conditions.

Public Safety:

The State Emergency Operations Center at Massachusetts Emergency Management Agency (MEMA) Headquarters will activate Saturday for the duration of the storm to monitor its impacts, coordinate response efforts and support impacted communities. MSP will have increased staffing for storm patrols and will offer additional support as needed statewide, and MSP Marine Unit assets and equipment will be pre-positioned to assist in flood-rescue efforts if needed. Residents are encouraged to check with their local public safety officials for shelter and other resources available during and after a storm, and can call 2-1-1 for any non-emergency storm questions.

DCR Closures:

This evening, the Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR) will implement parking bans for agency-managed parkways. Parking bans will be consistent with local municipal bans in which the parkways are located, and are expected to be lifted shortly after the completion of snow clearing operations. All coastal DCR-operated parking lots, as well as some agency-managed recreational facilities, will also be closed. Please

check DCR's website and Twitter @MassDCR for updates.

The Baker-Polito Administration remains in close contact with MEMA, National Weather Service, MassDOT and MSP to monitor the forecast and will work to alert the public with important updates or notifications. Please visit mass.gov/snow to learn what you should do before, during and after a winter storm.