



NEWS RELEASE

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For Immediate Release

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STATE HIGHWAY ADMINISTRATION GEARS UP FOR WINTER WEATHER IN MARYLAND

Strategy Focuses on Salt Reduction

(November 17, 2016) – The Maryland Department of Transportation’s State Highway Administration (SHA) is prepared for the upcoming winter season. No matter which forecast you read, the truth is the winter of 2016/2017 could leave Maryland covered in snow, pelted with sleet or encrusted in freezing rain any given day. With millions of people trying to get to and from work, school and activities, SHA is prepared to clear roads as quickly as possible. Today, SHA showed off its snow fighting equipment at the Statewide Operations Center in Hanover and at the Fairland Maintenance Facility in Montgomery County.

“Whether testing new materials and equipment or training new plow drivers, SHA is prepared for this winter season,” said SHA Administrator Gregory C. Johnson, P.E. “We have also developed sensible salting strategies to reduce salt usage when treating roads. We have the tools we need to get to bare pavement within four hours after the last snowflake falls; we need drivers to prepare as well.”

Salt Reduction Best Practices:

Anti-icing (Pre-treating):

SHA is continuing to pre-treat highways in advance of snow storms. This is a proactive operation with crews spraying salt brine on roads and bridges prior to a snow storm and allowing sufficient drying time. The brine prevents snow and ice from bonding or “packing” on the surface of the highway. It’s important to note that if a storm is forecasted to begin as rain or sleet, SHA will NOT pre-treat because the liquid precipitation will simply wash the brine solution off of the roadways.

Pre-wetting granular salt:

Each year, SHA’s goal is to use less salt on the roads while keeping highways safe and passable. One method is to pre-wet salt before dispensing it onto the roads. SHA wets the salt with brine or magnesium chloride prior to spreading; this helps it adhere to road surfaces and prevent waste due to “bounce and scatter.” Experience and studies show that pre-wetting can lead to a 30 percent reduction in salt usage.

Liquid-only routes:

SHA has designated at least one “liquid only” snow route in many of its seven engineering districts. Meeting the standard criteria for salt brine application, SHA will only use salt brine in the actual treatment of these roads during a snow storm. Using salt brine reduces overall salt usage, which is less intrusive to the environment. SHA has strategically placed an additional 196,000 gallons of salt brine in key areas across Maryland.

During the storm

SHA’s advice is to TAKE IT SLOW ON ICE AND SNOW. Remember: don’t pass snow plows or plow trains. The unplowed roads are ahead of the plows and the treated roads are behind them. SHA asks motorists to clear snow completely off vehicles before driving. A clean vehicle provides increased visibility, and packed snow on car tops can become dangerous projectiles in the days after a storm.

When the weather service forecasts storms with six or more inches of snow, SHA will designate certain park and ride lots where truckers can pull off and wait out the storm. These lots serve as safe havens for truckers and lessen the chance of large trucks becoming stuck or disabled during winter weather. For a complete listing of emergency truck pull off locations, [click here](#).

For storms forecast with increased accumulations, SHA will deploy heavy-duty tow trucks to strategic locations to tow large commercial trucks should they become disabled in the roadway.

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SHA crews work hard to keep roads passable during snow storms to maintain access to critical services, such as hospitals. SHA reminds everyone to ***“Know Before You Go – Especially in Ice and Snow.”*** Maryland has free 511 traveler information. Call 511 or 1-855-GOMD511, or visit: www.md511.org for current travel information including current snow emergency plans. Sign up to personalize travel route information through MY511 on the website. Remember to use 511 safely - Maryland law restricts hand-held mobile phone use and texting while driving. Travelers can also plan ahead by logging onto the cyber highway at www.roads.maryland.gov and clicking on “CHART” before heading out.

Finally, follow SHA on social media via Twitter @MDSHA and on Facebook at <http://www.Facebook.com/MarylandStateHighwayAdministration>. The social media platforms are staffed Monday through Friday 8:30 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. and during major emergencies and storms.

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