

PennDOT - District 5 News

Vehicle Restrictions in Place on Interstates and Expressways in East Central Pennsylvania

In response to winter weather, the Pennsylvania Department of Transportation (PennDOT) has implemented Tier 1 restrictions on trucks and other vehicles on interstate highways and limited access expressways in east central Pennsylvania. Speed restrictions are also in place on some highways.

Effective at 4:00 AM today, Tier 1 restrictions are in place for the following roadways:

- Route 22 in Lehigh and Northampton counties;
- Route 33 in Monroe and Northampton counties;
- Interstate 78 in Berks, Lehigh and Northampton counties;
- Interstate 80 in Carbon and Monroe counties;
- Interstate 81 in Schuylkill County;
- Interstate 176 in Berks County; and
- Interstate 380 in Monroe County.

Under Tier 1 restrictions, the following vehicles are not permitted on affected roadways:

- Tractors without trailers;
- Tractors towing unloaded or lightly loaded enclosed trailers, open trailers or tank trailers;
- Tractors towing unloaded or lightly loaded tandem trailers;
- Enclosed cargo delivery trucks that meet the definition of a CMV;
- Passenger vehicles (cars, SUV's, pickup trucks, etc.) towing trailers;
- Recreational vehicles/motorhomes;
- School buses, commercial buses and motor coaches not carrying chains or Alternate Traction Devices (ATD's); and
- Motorcycles.

Also, as of 8:30 AM speed limits are reduced to 45 mph on Route 22 in Lehigh and Northampton counties and Interstate 78 in Berks, Lehigh and Northampton counties for all vehicles while the vehicle restrictions are in place. All truck drivers are reminded that during these speed limit reductions trucks are to travel in the right lane of the highway. Additional speed restrictions on other interstates and expressways could be added depending on changing conditions.

Restrictions will be communicated via variable message boards, the 511PA traveler information website at www.511pa.com and smartphone apps. Motorists can also sign up for alerts on www.511pa.com by clicking on "Personal Alerts" in the left-hand menu.

PennDOT urges motorists to avoid travel during the storm if possible. But if travel is necessary, use caution, reduce speeds and be aware of changing weather conditions. Freezing temperatures are expected during this event, so motorists should be aware of blowing and drifting snow, which can cause icy areas on roadways, including overpasses and bridges. With freezing temperatures, roads that only look wet may actually be icy, and extra caution is needed when approaching bridges and highway ramps where ice can form without warning.

To help make decisions regarding winter travel, motorists are encouraged to "Know Before You Go" by checking conditions on more than 40,000 roadway miles, including color-coded winter conditions on 2,900 miles, by visiting 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. Users can also see plow truck statuses and travel alerts along a specific route using the "Check My Route" tool.

511PA is also available through a smartphone application for iPhone and Android devices, by calling 5-1-1, or by following regional Twitter alerts accessible on the 511PA website.

Drivers should prepare or restock their emergency kits with items such as non-perishable food, water, first-aid supplies, warm clothes, a blanket, cell phone charger and a small snow shovel. Motorists should tailor their kits to any specific needs that they or their families have such as baby supplies, extra medication and pet supplies.

When winter weather occurs, drivers should be extra cautious around operating snow-removal equipment. When encountering a plow truck, drivers should:

- Stay at least six car lengths behind an operating plow truck and remember that the main plow is wider than the truck.
- Be alert since plow trucks generally travel much more slowly than other traffic.
- When a plow truck is traveling toward you, move as far away from the center of the road as is safely possible, and remember that snow can obscure the actual snow plow width.
- Never try to pass or get between several trucks plowing side by side in a "plow train." The weight of the snow thrown from the plow can quickly cause smaller vehicles to lose control, creating a hazard for nearby vehicles.
- Never travel next to a plow truck since there are blind spots where the operator can't see, and they can occasionally be moved sideways when hitting drifts or heavy snowpack.
- Keep your lights on to help the operator better see your vehicle. Also remember that under Pennsylvania state law, vehicle lights must be on every time a vehicle's wipers are on due to inclement weather.

Last winter in Pennsylvania, preliminary data shows that there were 151 crashes resulting in three fatalities and 81 injuries on snowy, slushy or ice-covered roadways where aggressive driving behaviors such as speeding or making careless lane changes were factors.

For more information on safe winter travel, an emergency kit checklist and information on PennDOT's winter operations including a video, visit www.PennDOT.gov/winter. Additional winter driving and other highway safety information is available at www.PennDOT.gov/safety.

Follow the conversation by using #PAWinter on Twitter at www.twitter.com/PennDOTNews and visit the department on Facebook at www.facebook.com/PennsylvaniaDepartmentofTransportation.

Follow local PennDOT information on Twitter at www.twitter.com/511PAAllentown.

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