For Immediate Release:
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News Release

Georgia Prepares for Freezing Weather, Declares a State of Emergency

(ATLANTA) – The Georgia Emergency Management and Homeland Security Agency is working with state partners and communicating with local officials in preparation for the inclement weather heading Georgia’s way this week. Governor Kemp issued a State of Emergency for all 159 counties in Georgia that goes into effect Wednesday, December 21. The declaration makes state resources available to local governments and entities statewide.

Road Preparations

The Georgia Department of Transportation are brining roads today in northwest Georgia and will begin in metro Atlanta and Northeast Georgia at 7 a.m. Thursday. Brine operations will continue all day Thursday and into Friday.

Crews will prioritize treating interstates, state routes, bridges and overpasses, with priority routes including the entirety of I-20, I-85 and I-75 north of metro Atlanta, I-75 south of metro Atlanta to Macon, and I-85 south of Atlanta to Columbus.

Georgia DOT will be closing all Georgia Express Lanes at midnight Thursday into Friday. Motorists in affected areas are asked to plan now to limit travel Thursday into Friday morning. If you must venture out during this time, please give GDOT crews room and space on the roads to help ensure they can safely do their jobs.

Please be aware of the brine trucks and know they must travel 40 mph to properly apply the treatment. Please pay attention and stay back at least 100 feet.

Public Preparedness

- Make a Ready kit for at least three days of self-sufficiency.
- While creating/updating your Ready kit, keep in mind each person’s specific needs, including medication and remember the needs of your pets. Some suggestions are as follows:
  - Battery-operated devices, such as a flashlight, a National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) Weather Radio, and lamps;
  - extra batteries;
  - first-aid kit and extra medicine;
  - baby items and special needs items
- Plan to check on elderly/disabled relatives and neighbors.
- Stay hydrated during the winter weather event. Dehydration occurs more in cold weather, and people less suspect it because they are not sweating.
- Stock food that needs no cooking or refrigeration, and store water in clean containers.
• Keep water in clean bathtubs or pots to have for drinking and personal hygienic use if you are on a well.
• Plan on bringing your pets inside during the winter weather event.
• Listen to NOAA Weather Radio to stay informed of winter weather watches and warnings. Also monitor trusted news sources for more information.

Preparing your homes

• Make sure your home is well insulated and that you have weather stripping around your doors and windowsills to keep the warm air inside.
• Wrap outside pipes in Styrofoam and ensure that the valves are shut off.
• Open cabinet doors to allow heat to get to uninsulated pipes under sinks and appliances near exterior walls.
• Install and test smoke alarms and carbon monoxide detectors with battery backups.
• Allow faucets to drip a little during cold weather to avoid freezing.
• If traveling out of town for the holidays, please have someone you trust to check on your home to ensure you have not lost power.

Heating your homes

• Keep space heater safety in mind: Use electric space heaters with automatic shut-off switches and non-glowing elements. Remember to keep all heat sources at least three feet away from furniture and drapes.
• If you have a wood burning fireplace, consider storing extra wood in your garage to keep you warm if winter weather knocks out your heat.
• Don’t use an oven to heat your home.
• Never use a generator, camp stove, charcoal grill, gasoline or propane heater indoors.
• Keep generators outside at least 20 feet away from doors, windows and vents.

In case of power loss

• Winter storms are often accompanied by power outages. Always exercise caution when using alternative light and heating sources:
  o Use flashlights during power outages instead of candles to prevent the risk of fire, and have plenty of extra batteries on-hand.
• Have at least one of the following heat sources in case the power goes out:
  o Extra blankets, sleeping bags and warm winter coats
  o Fireplace or wood-burning stove with plenty of dry firewood, or a gas log fireplace.
  o Kerosene heater, with proper ventilation.
  o Utilize your vehicle as a heating source. Be sure it is not in an enclosed space, i.e., garage.
• Remember to check on elderly/disabled relatives and neighbors.
• People who depend on electricity to operate medical equipment should have alternate arrangements in place in case power is out for an extended period of time.
• Notify someone if issues arise regarding heat or need for assistance during winter weather event. Contact your local EMA.
• In case of power loss, please reach out to local EMAs for list of warming stations.
• Georgia State Parks are opening warming stations for public use. Visit https://gastateparks.org/Alerts for a listing of the locations.

www.gema.georgia.gov
Prepare your vehicle

- Fully winterize your vehicle: Have a mechanic check antifreeze, brakes, heater and defroster, tires, and windshield wipers to ensure they are in good shape. Keep your gas tank full.
- Keep an extra Ready kit in the trunk of your car.
- In addition to the basic essentials, consider adding a portable cell phone charger, ice scraper, extra blankets, sand for traction, jumper cables and a portable air pump for your tires.

Be watchful of health concerns

- Watch for frostbite.
  - Warning signs include white or grayish-yellow skin, numbness and skin that feels unusually firm or waxy.
  - If symptoms are detected, get medical help immediately.
  - If medical help is not available, get the victim to a warm location and immerse the affected area in warm water.
  - Frostbitten areas are numb and can be easily burned so avoid using heating pads, fireplaces or radiators for warming.
  - Do not rub the frostbitten area; this could cause more damage.
- Watch for signs of hypothermia, including shivering, memory loss, fumbling hands, slurred speech and drowsiness.
  - If the victim’s body temperature is below 95 degrees, seek medical help immediately.
  - If medical help is not available, get the victim to a warm location, remove wet clothing, warm the center of the body first using an electric blanket and if conscious, give the victim warm, non-alcoholic beverages.

Georgians should pay close attention to guidance from local officials and review your emergency plan with those in your care. Everyone is encouraged to start planning now by prepare Ready kits and reviewing communications plans for their families.

Pay attention to guidance from their local officials and trusted news sources for the most updated information. For more information, visit gema.georgia.gov/plan-prepare/storms-disasters/winter for more information.

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As part of the Office of the Governor, the Georgia Emergency Management and Homeland Security Agency collaborates with local, state and federal governments in partnership with private sector and non-governmental organizations to protect life and property against man-made and natural emergencies. GEMA/HS’s Ready Georgia website and preparedness campaign provides Georgians with the knowledge needed to effectively prepare for disasters. Go to gema.georgia.gov/plan-prepare/ready-georgia for information on developing a custom emergency plan and Ready kit.