



Michigan Department of Transportation

newsroom



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MDOT prepares to meet the challenge of winter during a pandemic

October 26, 2020 -- With winter already on its way to parts of the state, the Michigan Department of Transportation (MDOT) is doing what it does every year: preparing. But this winter may pose new challenges for keeping our roads clear.

"Over the years, maintenance workers at the state and local levels have handled everything winter could throw at them but, with the continuing threat of COVID-19, this is going to be an unprecedented winter," said State Transportation Director Paul C. Ajegba. "We're working with local agencies and county road commissions to plan for contingencies, but we want drivers to know the pandemic could affect our ability to maintain winter levels of service."

The goal of MDOT and its partner agencies remains clearing highways to bare pavement as quickly as possible after a winter storm. If MDOT or local contract agencies are temporarily affected by COVID-19 infections or associated quarantines, it may take longer to reach this goal.

"During snowstorms, MDOT and our contract agencies will have all available staff out working to clear roads as quickly as possible," Ajegba said. "We'll be asking the public for their patience and understanding if we need to manage temporary staff shortages. We'll do the best we can with the resources available."

As we move into winter, drivers need to remember they also share responsibility for safety when they venture out. Motorists must follow Michigan's Basic Speed Law, which requires them to drive at a "careful and prudent" speed in all driving conditions that also allows them to be able to stop within the clear distance ahead. It may mean driving slower than the posted speed limit.

MDOT and Michigan State Police (MSP) collaborated to produce a [video](#) with information on how roads are maintained each winter and the actions motorists should take now to be prepared for inclement driving conditions. The video also covers:

- How to prepare your vehicle for winter driving, such as making sure tires are in good condition and that all snow and ice have been cleared from your vehicle before heading onto the road;
- Why drivers should give plow operators extra space, and consider staying behind them in winter storms;
- How drivers can see what plow truck operators see through the [Mi Drive travel information website](#), and see their position on state routes in real time;
- The use of green lights on plow trucks;
- [Michigan's Move Over Law](#), which requires motorists to move over for stationary emergency vehicles with their lights activated or slow down and pass with caution if it is not possible to safely change lanes, and
- Other reminders for winter driving, such as avoiding distractions, using headlights during winter weather, and leaving extra space between vehicles.

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