



STATE OF OHIO

Emergency Operations Center

NEWS RELEASE
www.ema.ohio.gov

Ted Strickland, Governor

Emergency Management Agency
2855 W. Dublin Granville Rd.
Columbus, Ohio 43235

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

Saturday, March 8, 2008

Contact:

Keith Dailey, Governor's Office, (614) 506-4949,
Tom Hunter, Ohio Department of Public Safety, (614) 403-0302

Governor Urges Ohioans To Exercise Caution, Avoid Travel In Hazardous Winter Storm Conditions

- 55 counties under winter storm warning through tonight -

COLUMBUS, Ohio – Gov. Ted Strickland today advised Ohioans to continue to avoid unnecessary travel in hazardous winter storm conditions that have impacted much of the state during the past 24 hours. The National Weather Service has issued a winter storm warning that is in effect for 55 Ohio counties through this evening, with blizzard warnings in effect until 4 p.m. for 29 counties.

“Ohioans have taken a common-sense approach to the severe winter weather that has impacted our state, and I encourage all Ohioans to continue to avoid any unnecessary travel,” the governor said. “Our state and local partners have responded in a manner that speaks well for Ohio’s level of preparedness, and I commend everyone who has been supporting these efforts.”

The Governor also joined state officials in encouraging neighbors across the state to check on those who are shut-in, elderly and disabled as they wait out this storm.

"At a time like this, it is important that Ohioans take steps to ensure that we're caring for one another. This is a situation where neighbors should be helping neighbors, ensuring that family, friends and those who cannot leave their homes are safe and secure."

The Ohio Emergency Management Agency is continuing monitoring and assessment of the storm, which has dumped as much as a foot of snow on some areas of the state. As of 11 a.m. this morning, local sheriff's departments had declared Level Three snow emergencies in 21 counties, Level Two snow emergencies in 28 counties and Level One snow emergencies in five counties.

County emergency management officials statewide are working closely with Ohio EMA in assessing the impact of the storm, but no counties have made any declarations or requests for state assistance.

From 4 p.m. Friday through 7 a.m. Saturday, the Ohio State Highway Patrol investigated 577 crashes, with 49 involving injuries. For those who have to travel this weekend, the Ohio State Highway Patrol recommends that in the event of a vehicle breakdown, turn on hazard warning lights, safely position the vehicle as far off the road as possible and open the hood. Place a "help" sign in the rear window, and stay inside the vehicle until help arrives. If a cell phone is available, dial 1-877-7-PATROL for assistance and the call will be directed to the nearest Patrol post.

-more-

Crews with the Ohio Department of Transportation have been working extended hours throughout this storm, with additional crews added Saturday during the daytime hours. As of 11 a.m., more than 1,244 ODOT snow plows were in service statewide. On high-travelled multi-lane interstates, crews are concentrating efforts on the main driving lanes. Currently, all major interstates remain open.

Severe snowfall and drifting snow has forced restrictions at more than 372 locations on the statewide highway system. During these winter weather events - when visibility is limited - motorists are encouraged to give the snow plows room to work: Don't Crowd the Plow.

For up-to-date road conditions, ODOT reminds motorists to log on to www.buckeyetraffic.org. The website offers the latest mapping technology to show current road and weather conditions, including images from traffic cameras and weather sensors across the state. At the heights of this winter storm, the website experienced more than 9,000 connections per minute.

####