

NEWS RELEASE

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DOTD prepares for wintry, unsafe road conditions; urges citizens not to drive and use 511 for up-to-date information on road closures

BATON ROUGE – With the possibility of snow, rain and sleet in parts of the state tonight through Wednesday, the Louisiana Department of Transportation and Development announced that the department’s staff is preparing to deal with winter weather and icy road conditions.

DOTD urges motorists not to drive during hazardous conditions. If you must drive, use extra caution.

The department’s plan is to pretreat some portions of the interstates and major corridors to keep them open as long as possible. However, elevated highways are especially susceptible to unsafe icing during prolonged freezing temperatures. DOTD will also concentrate efforts on major corridors.

There is not enough equipment or resources to keep all the bridges in the state open. All efforts will be made to keep the interstate system and major corridors open in the event of snow or ice. When a bridge or roadway is deemed unsafe, it will be closed.

“DOTD staff and other local and state agencies worked tirelessly to keep as many roads open as they could during last week’s winter weather event,” said DOTD Secretary Sherri H. LeBas. “We saw the elevated portions, such as I-10 over the Atchafalaya Basin and Mississippi River Bridge, freeze and take a while to thaw. These conditions should be taken seriously. Don’t drive unless you have to.”

During winter weather conditions, motorists should follow these five safety tips:

1. Drive slowly, carefully, and avoid driving while distracted
2. Allow for extra driving time
3. Reduce speeds when visibility is low
4. Make sure there is plenty of room between vehicles
5. Look out for black ice---a thin, transparent layer of ice accumulation that can be visually hard to detect on bridges, overpasses, off-ramps and in shady spots.

As always, DOTD reminds motorists to buckle up and refrain from drinking and driving. In addition, motorists need to be on the look-out for DOTD work vehicles applying de-icing material to area bridges and overpasses.

Citizens can get the latest updates on real-time traffic and road conditions by using the 511 Traveler Information System simply by dialing 511 from their telephone and saying the route or region about which they are seeking information. Out-of-state travelers can call 1-888-ROAD-

511 (1-888-762-3511). Travelers can also access this information by visiting the 511 Traveler Information Web site at www.511la.org.

Motorists can also obtain information regarding road closures by contacting DOTD's Customer Service Center at 1-877-4LA-DOTD (1-877-452-3683). The center is open 7:30 a.m.-5 p.m., Monday through Friday.

Additionally, motorists can utilize the new "Way to Geaux" application to receive real-time, around the clock travel alerts. The hands-free, eyes-free smartphone application can be downloaded on any iPhone or Android device by visiting either the iTunes App Store, or Google Play.

Last week, DOTD emergency personnel were put on standby, and crews will continue to monitor weather forecasts and respond in the event there are severe weather conditions. In addition, DOTD crews have checked supply inventories and are prepared to:

- Apply de-icing materials over any affected bridges and roadways
- Remove fallen trees from the roadway
- Close any roads, if needed