



News from the Ohio Turnpike

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For Immediate Release with LINK to B-Roll, photos and other materials:

Ohio Turnpike Snow & Ice Fleet is ready for Old Man Winter 2020-2021

Maintenance crews take COVID-19 safety precautions during inspections

BEREA (Oct. 20-23, 2020) – Ohio Turnpike maintenance crews made their final preparations for the upcoming winter season on Oct. 20-23, with comprehensive winter equipment inspections at its eight Maintenance Buildings along the 241-mile mainline.

The Turnpike-wide, 136-point inspection of all snowplows and equipment takes place annually just before the first signs of winter weather. This year, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the inspection process was limited to essential employees. Inspection teams were organized to adapt to the need for social distancing and mask-wearing as crews remain committed to the safety of themselves and the traveling public.

“The safety of our employees and our customers cannot be compromised, and the pandemic has created new obstacles in meeting that requirement,” said Chris Matta, Deputy Chief Engineer and Director of Field Operations for the Ohio Turnpike.

“Our goal is to exceed expectations by providing this essential service during the pandemic and keeping everyone healthy. By taking extra precautions we can ensure that a full staff of employees is available to perform snow and ice operations and other critical maintenance activities, which will provide our valued customers with a first-class road to travel on,” Matta added.

A sufficient number of snowplows will be available at any given moment to maintain the 1,395 lane miles, 31 interchanges, and 14 service plazas on the Ohio Turnpike. When snow and ice events continue around the clock, crews will work 12-hour shifts to clear the road. There are 15 salt storage facilities and the Turnpike begins stockpiling salt in the late summer. Crews use an average of 66,000 tons of salt each year and 187,000 gallons of liquid chemicals per year.

The top priority, especially during extremely heavy snowfall is clearing the right and center lanes on the Turnpike mainline. Then the crews focus attention on third lanes, interchanges, service plazas and shoulders.

Turnpike crews use multiple techniques and advanced equipment to battle winter snowstorms, including towplows. Towplows have the ability to clear and treat two lanes of traffic

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simultaneously while using only one truck. This is a benefit because it allows additional lane miles to receive attention in less time, saves fuel and creates fewer emissions.

Typically customers will see Turnpike trucks on the mainline performing tandem plowing, where two snowplows travel one behind the other to clear two lanes at the same time.

Another method sometimes performed is Echelon Plowing, which utilizes four or more snowplows closely staggered to clear all lanes of the Turnpike, including the shoulders, with one pass. This is typically required when a single heavy storm or multiple storms occur, which often causes excess snow to build up on the median wall.

These techniques on the Turnpike, along with other standard practices, make it one of the safest routes to travel this winter.

The Ohio Turnpike is not subject to local Snow Emergencies and does not close during them.

It's also important for customers to do their part in making travel safe for everyone. Simple steps to take: make sure your vehicle is road-ready, plan for extra travel time when necessary and always allow extra distance between vehicles.

Motorists should slow down, avoid distractions and drive according to the conditions of the road. They should be especially cautious on ramps, bridges and overpasses.

Motorists should avoid passing snowplows and allow extra space for the plow drivers to clear the road. "Our experienced and dedicated crews will be working hard to make sure customers have a safe driving experience on the Ohio Turnpike," added Matta. "After all, the safest place to be on the road is *behind* a snowplow."

Regarding the Snow & Ice inspections and operations during the COVID-19 pandemic:

Due to COVID-19, the process of the Ohio Turnpike Annual Snow and Ice Inspections has been modified to reduce the number of those involved at the Maintenance Buildings. These modifications and measures to provide safe working conditions include:

- Conducting facility and safety portions of the inspections on alternative dates.
- Limiting outside visitors, including media members, from attending the inspections.
- Limiting the number of maintenance employees performing the inspections and operating the equipment.
- Requiring all those attending the inspections to wear masks inside the facility and when social distancing cannot be maintained outside of the facility.
- Performing health assessments of all participants and visitors, including temperature checks and wellness questions.
- Regularly cleaning and disinfecting to minimize exposure on high-touch common surfaces, including vehicles, doors, workstations, etc.

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