

Washington State Department of Transportation - News

South Central Region – P.O. Box 12560 - Yakima, WA 98909-2560

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

December 18, 2008

2 p.m. update

Public Road Condition Inquiries: Call 5-1-1/ out of state callers call 1-800-695-ROAD (7623).

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Winter driving conditions all over Washington; mountain pass and South Central Washington snow measured in feet

SEATTLE– A snowstorm that slowed Puget Sound commute drivers to a crawl brought more than a foot of snow to Spokane and Washington's mountain pass highways.

Drivers need to be prepared for winter driving conditions all over the state and if they must drive, plan ahead and take precautions.

"We have more than 1,000 people working around the clock, with 450 trucks out on the road clearing close to 20,000 highway lane miles," said WSDOT Secretary Paula Hammond. "We need drivers help. Your route will most likely have snow, but the amount and severity could change. We need drivers to prepare for winter driving conditions, especially on ramps, bridges, intersections and lower volume highways. Before you go, check our website and local media reports."

Drivers in most areas of Washington have been dealing with winter weather since early this morning, with compact snow and ice reported on highways all across Washington.

The mountain passes and Spokane were especially hard hit, with compact snow and ice, wind and single digit temperatures across most of Eastern Washington. Reports say this weather could continue tonight, with clearing and cold temperatures expected Friday and Saturday. Forecasts call for more snow late Saturday into Sunday.

With this winter weather slowing drivers, the WSDOT Web site also experienced record usage and a bit of a slowdown Wednesday and today. There were 5.8 million page views Wednesday, a new WSDOT web usage record. By 11 a.m. today, we had close to 2.5 million page views. Between 9 and 11 a.m. today, we established a text version of the

WSDOT homepage and Seattle traffic site and directed users to the WSDOT blog and Twitter site for updated traffic reports. Visit www.wsdot.wa.gov/news to sign up for the WSDOT blog and Twitter updates.

Drivers who are ready for the weather and drive safely help WSDOT and themselves. One spin-out can block traffic for hours and cause additional incidents. And, clearing incidents can also take our crews away from road-clearing activities.

Drivers should be prepared, carry chains, slow down and allow extra time to reach your destination safely. Slow down when approaching intersections, off-ramps, bridges or shady spots. These all have potential to develop black ice that makes driving hazardous.

Know Before you go:

- Get information from our Web site at www.wsdot.wa.gov before you leave your home or office.
- 511 - This driver information phone line provides current traffic, incident and closure information. TTY users can call 1-800-833-6388. Out-of-state callers can access the information at call 1-800-695-ROAD (7623).
- Mountain pass conditions are available at www.wsdot.wa.gov/traffic/passes/.
- At www.wsdot.wa.gov/winter, drivers can find WSDOT's winter driving-related information, including preparing a vehicle for winter driving, safe driving tips and mountain pass travel advisories. The WSDOT winter site also offers information about chains, winter tires and how WSDOT maintenance crews work in winter weather.
- On WSDOT's website, www.wsdot.wa.gov/traffic/weather, drivers can look roadway temperatures and see camera images from across the state.
- At www.wsdot.wa.gov/traffic/trafficalerts, a map shows highway incidents and closures.
- Sign up for news. WSDOT offers subscribers more than 25 specialized e-mail alerts, including news and information for freight haulers, construction related traffic revisions, project updates from all around the state, and timely updates on pass conditions. Visit www.wsdot.wa.gov and click the link for "E-mail updates."
- Twitter users can add WSDOT to their personal accounts at: <http://twitter.com/wsdot/>. Go to www.wsdot.wa.gov/inform/twitter for more details.

Western Washington:

- Interstate 5 Express Lanes are open in the northbound direction.

- WSDOT Commercial Vehicle Services has restricted oversize vehicles in Western Washington.

On the Road:

- Overhead and roadside electronic signs

- Highway advisory radio - WSDOT advises drivers to program 530AM and 1610AM on your radio.

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WSDOT keeps people, businesses and the economy moving by operating and improving the state's transportation systems. To learn more about what we're doing, go to www.wsdot.wa.gov/news for pictures, videos, news and blogs. Real time traffic information is available at www.wsdot.wa.gov/traffic or by dialing 5-1-1.