

Governor Quinn Salutes Illinois' Public Safety Workers and National Guard Members

Written by Andrew Mason
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Efforts Aided More Than 4,000 Illinois Motorists Affected by Major Winter Storm, Maintained Critical State Services

SPRINGFIELD – February 4, 2011. Governor Pat Quinn today thanked the first responders and Illinois National Guard members who assisted more than 4,000 motorists during this week's major snowstorm. The state's response effort was coordinated by the Illinois Emergency Management Agency (IEMA) from the State Emergency Operations Center (SEOC) in Springfield. Liaisons from the state's key agencies worked around the clock from Monday afternoon through Thursday afternoon on response efforts.

"I thank the public servants and servicemembers who worked together to ensure public safety and preserve critical state services during this dangerous storm," said Governor Quinn. "Nearly the entire state was affected by this major winter storm, but by working together we were able to help more than 4,000 people in distress and ensure that essential state services were continued without interruption."

The state's combined efforts cleared 16,500 miles of highway and assisted more than 4,000 stranded motorists. The coordinated effort was led by the Illinois State Police (ISP), Illinois National Guard (ING), Illinois Department of Natural Resources (IDNR) and Illinois Department of Transportation (IDOT)

From noon Tuesday through Wednesday afternoon, ISP assisted 3,400 stranded motorists

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throughout Illinois and handled 270 traffic accidents.

More than 500 Illinois National Guard soldiers and airmen were mobilized Tuesday to assist ISP with response to stranded motorists. Using more than 140 military vehicles, including 114 Humvees, the Illinois Guard assisted more than 200 snowed-in vehicles and assisted ISP with 16 vehicles, six accidents and one ambulance.

Illinois Department of Natural Resources Conservation Police (CPOs) also were activated for storm response duties on Tuesday to provide welfare checks and assist stranded motorists on Illinois roadways. Nearly 50 CPOs used all-weather vehicles, including more than 50 snowmobiles and ATVs, to rescue or provide assistance to more than 550 stranded motorists during the height of the storm. Conservation police rescued several dozen people including a stroke victim and brought others to warming centers open throughout the state.

Since the storm began, 2,800 IDOT drivers have cleared 16,500 miles of highway throughout the state, utilizing 1,629 trucks. As a result of IDOT's around-the-clock snowplowing effort over the past several days, roads that were virtually impassable during the height of the storm have improved significantly and continue to improve each hour.

Facility management personnel from CMS ensured that necessary facilities were open, including several 24-hour facilities that offer service to the public, ISP and IDOT locations and headquarters that were critical to the response efforts, and garages to support public agency fleets. The agency's division of vehicles played an important role in the state's response by delivering fuel to keep plows running and making repairs. Some mechanics stayed overnight in the fleet garages to ensure they could get on the road again to continue assisting first response agencies.

The Illinois Tollway mobilized its full fleet of 183 snow plows to quickly clear the roads and kept its snow operations center open throughout the duration of the storm. The Tollway's dispatch center handled 1,549 incident calls during the storm and the agency worked with state police to respond to 77 traffic crashes, assist 512 motorists, fulfill 33 requests for service (fuel, tire change, etc.) and tow 133 vehicles.

Other storm-related state efforts included providing updated information about shelters and

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warming centers, road conditions, interstate access restrictions, and winter safety tips; coordinating with critical facilities, such as hospitals and nursing homes, to ensure they had power, water, medical supplies and staffing to remain operational; and tracking power outages throughout the state.

Throughout the winter storm, IEMA continually updated information on www.Ready.Illinois.gov to ensure citizens had access to vital storm-related information. Between Tuesday and Thursday there were more than 2.2 million hits to the state's preparedness site, more than four times the total number of hits during the month of January.

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