VDOT’s 2008-2009 WINTER WEATHER PREPAREDNESS

Nov. 19, 2008
Jimmy White, Emergency Response Initiative Director
Jeff Caldwell, Chief of Communications
• Feb. 12 ice storm in Northern Virginia prompted renewed focus

• Immediate action steps implemented to ensure adequate coverage for Springfield Interchange and storms impacts around the state

• Established an aggressive program to improve VDOT’s emergency response protocols and practices, and to strengthen its maintenance force.

• In April 2008, VDOT delivered a long-term forward plan to refocus the agency on its emergency response mission

• VDOT vowed to develop a comprehensive training program to educate front-line maintenance supervisors on all of the best practices available for snow and ice removal, and other emergencies
FIRST STEP—SNOW AND ICE RESPONSE

- Established an emergency response team from districts and Central Office for planning
- Completed comprehensive review of anti-icing techniques and technology best practices
- Developed of improved command and control structure and implementation of duty officers
- Held Snowfighters skills competitions around the Commonwealth
- Developing of new contracts for road weather information to improve data
FIRST STEP—SNOW AND ICE RESPONSE

• Developed VATraffic internal tracking system to improve information sharing

• Developed comprehensive training program to educate front-line maintenance supervisors on best practices available for snow and ice removal and other emergencies

• Trained 150+ front-line supervisors and key emergency response managers during Transportation Emergency Response Institute
• Curriculum taught by internal and external industry experts
  – Anti-Icing
  – Command and Control
  – Contracting and Procurement
  – Technology
  – Communications

• Four sessions held in Blacksburg and Richmond
ANTI-ICING

- Salt brine identified as leading technology
  - Effective
  - Cost efficient
  - Easy to make
- Equipment purchase ongoing to support pilot projects
- At least 200 miles identified in each district for pilot
- Specific focus on Springfield Interchange
TECHNOLOGY IMPROVEMENTS

WEATHER INFORMATION
- RWIS Upgrades
- Meteorologist contract
- VATraffic
- Enhanced pavement sensor network

COMMUNICATIONS
- Repaired and enhanced variable message network
- Enhancing VDOT radio network
- Improved Web sites for public information
- Focused outreach to media
DEMONSTRATING PREPAREDNESS

• Media outreach
  – 12 press conferences held Nov. 10
  – Coverage in all major media markets
  – Dozens of positive media stories
    • A few stories focused on change in snow budget, but this was not tied to financial challenges

• VDOT launches new snow preparedness Web site
  – Interactive videos, audio, fact sheets
  – Already linked on You Tube and picked up by media outlets statewide
Safety First: VDOT Prepares for Winter

The Virginia Department of Transportation is planning ahead to ensure that all state-maintained roadways remain safe during winter weather and that people, services and goods can get from one corner of the commonwealth to the other. Details >

- Virginia Department of Emergency Management's snow information page
- Prepare your car for winter driving
- Snowfighters: An emergency response training skills competition
- How VDOT clears snow (WMV, 3 MB, 1:41)
- Safe winter driving (WMV, 2.5 MB, .55)

Download the free video player here. If you need any of this content in an accessible (federal section 508) format, call 804-786-2801.
KEY MESSAGES

• Safety is VDOT’s top priority and VDOT crews have been preparing for months to keep roads safe during winter weather.

• There will not be significant changes to levels of service due to budget or any other reason.

• VDOT aims to have all roads passable within 48 hours after the storm ends.

• Crews first clear interstates, primary roads and major secondary roads that connect localities, fire stations, employment hubs, military posts, schools, hospitals and other important public facilities.
  – Secondary roads and subdivision streets will be treated if multi-day storms hit the Commonwealth, but crews will focus efforts on those roads that carry the most traffic.

• This year we are working smarter, using technology to better target our efforts and implementing statewide anti-icing programs to work ahead of storms rather than react to them.
KEY MESSAGES

- VDOT has prepared for this winter with:
  - $75.8 million snow budget with $30 million reserve
  - 234,000 tons of salt
  - 62,200 tons of sand
  - More than 3,200 state crewmembers
  - 3,700 pieces of state snow-removal equipment
  - 4,300 private-sector pieces of snow-removal equipment and personnel to be used if needed
  - 310,000 gallons of liquid calcium chloride
  - 142,700 gallons of liquid magnesium chloride