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Press Release

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LIRR

IMMEDIATE

MTA LIRR Prepares for the Winter

Customer Communications Beefed-up; Snow Fighting Equipment Prepped for Winter

The winter season is now upon us, but the MTA Long Island Rail Road started its planning and preparations well ahead of time to help ensure everything is in place to deal with the challenges of winter weather.

"We have been gearing up for the winter," said LIRR President Helena E. Williams. "In our renewed commitment to customer service we have expanded customer communications capabilities, we've been winterizing and tuning up our snow fighting equipment, and testing our storm operating protocols and procedures. Our goal is to provide safe service during winter storms and to ensure a fast service recovery for our customers."

The LIRR has prepared its fleet of snow fighting equipment with full preventative maintenance servicing and functional testing. The fleet consists of nine jet snow blowers, three cold-air snow blowers and two double-ended snow broom/thrower machines. All of this equipment is strategically pre-positioned throughout the system and at the ready. Brand new to the LIRR's snow fighting equipment this year is: a dual purpose track machine – the ballast regulator/snow fighter – designed for removal of snow on our main track and in yards; three new jet snow blowers to replace some 40-year-old jet snow blowers; and the replacement of the turbine engine on the LIRR's road and rail capable jet snow blower.

Working to improve how we communicate with customers during snowstorms, the LIRR has beefed up its Public Information Office (PIO) and centralized all customer communication efforts. The PIO issues service alerts, direct from the LIRR's Operations Center, for customers that have [signed up](#) for this free service. Pertinent information regarding LIRR service and travel during the storm is posted on our website and on message boards at Penn Station, Atlantic Terminal and Jamaica. Station announcements and train status information displayed on electronic signs at stations comes from the PIO as well. The PIO will issue alerts to customers on all storm recovery efforts, including when services are being restored to full levels.

The LIRR will continue to use many of its time-tested strategies to maximize train performance and safety throughout severe winter weather conditions and during storm recovery efforts, such as:

- positioning personnel and equipment in strategic locations
- utilizing special scraper shoes in third rail territory – the special third rail contact shoes not only draw power, but also help remove icing which can hamper the train's ability to maintain proper electrical contact)
- dispatching specially equipped trains with third rail anti-ice/de-icing capabilities by applying a coating of anti-freeze to the electrified third rail to help reduce ice formation,
- crews pre-salting platforms before a snowstorm and clearing platforms of snow after the storm ends; as well as using outside contractors, when needed, to assist in our snow removal efforts,
- deploying Customer Assistance Personnel (CAP) to direct customers when alternate service plans dictate,
- running non-passenger, snow patrol trains along the LIRR's right-of-way to help prevent a build-up of snow and icing,
- turning on switch heaters to help keep switches moving freely, so that trains can be routed from one track to another.
- keeping station waiting rooms open around-the-clock to provide shelter for customers waiting for trains
- coordinating with local municipalities to monitor their efforts to clear parking lots.

All these efforts are designed with one thing in mind – to provide the most reliable service possible while ensuring the safety of our customers and employees.

The LIRR's goal is to keep operating as long as possible during a storm. We know our customers depend on the LIRR to get to and from work and other destinations. And, we take that responsibility very seriously. However, for the safety of our customers and employees, we may have to suspend service if snow accumulations reach between 10-13 inches. Some 80 percent of LIRR service is electric, meaning our trains must be able to maintain good contact with the third rail to draw sufficient power.

While our crews and snow fighting equipment work around the clock to keep the third rail and key switches clear before and during a storm, we have 11 branches and 700 miles of track to patrol. There are times when – due to high winds, snowdrift conditions and rate of snow accumulation – it may become impossible for the Railroad to keep up with a storm's intensity. If operating conditions become unsafe, we will suspend service.

The LIRR wants its customers to know that we always try to provide the greatest amount of service that is safely possible. Rest assured, if we can do better, we will.

Before venturing out in a storm, or immediately after one, it remains critical that customers check the [mta.info](#) website, call the LIRR's Travel Information Center and monitor media reports for the latest information. Customers should also [sign up](#) for the LIRR's free email alerts for service updates that come direct from the LIRR's train operations center. The LIRR's Travel Information Center can be reached by calling 511, the New York State Travel

Information Line, and say: Long Island Rail Road. If you are deaf or hard of hearing, use your preferred relay service provider or the free 711 relay to reach LIRR at 511.

When at stations during a storm, we urge customers to listen to announcements and to take extra care when traveling. Stay clear of the platform edges, use handrails on staircases and walk carefully when entering or exiting stations and boarding or leaving trains