



MTA Press Releases

[Select Language](#) | ▼

Press Release

December 15, 2020

[MTA Headquarters](#)

IMMEDIATE

MTA Announces Preparations In Advance of Winter Storm Gail

MTA Activates 24/7 Command Center to Monitor Winter Weather Event

Subways, Railroads and Bridges and Tunnels Deploy Specialized Snow Removal and De-Icing Equipment

All Local Buses Will Be Equipped with Chains

MTA Bridges and Tunnels to Implement Empty and Tandem Tractor Trailer Ban at 4 p.m. on Wednesday

LIRR to Operate on Enhanced Weekend Schedule on Thursday, Dec. 17

[Watch Video of News Conference and Bus Chaining Process](#)

[View Photos of Winter Weather Preparations](#)

With Winter Storm Gail forecast to bring between 6-18 inches of snow and wind gusts of up to 50 miles per hour, the Metropolitan Transportation Authority (MTA) has activated its 24/7 Command Center to monitor the storm and ensure safe, reliable service. MTA employees will be spreading salt and clearing platforms and stairs of snow and ice, keeping signals, switches, and third rail operating, and will remove any downed trees that may fall across tracks, and attend to any weather-related challenges during the storm.

The MTA urges customers to avoid traveling unless necessary. For those who must travel, the MTA suggests checking new.mta.info for the latest service updates before traveling, and to use extreme caution while navigating the system, especially on outdoor platforms and stairs. Customers should [sign up for real-time service alerts](#) via text or email. These alerts are also available via the MTA's apps: MYmta, Metro-North Train Time and Long Island Rail Road Train Time.

"The safety of our employees and customers continues to be our first priority as we prepare for the first winter storm of the season," said **MTA Chairman and CEO Patrick J. Foye**. "The MTA is no stranger to the challenges posed by inclement weather and is ready as always to rise to the occasion in order to keep New York moving."

"All MTA agencies are closely monitoring this storm and we will be ready for whatever winter conditions come our way," said **MTA Chief Safety Officer Patrick Warren**. "We have a comprehensive plan in place that includes using equipment and personnel to keep tracks, stations, platforms and roadways clear of snow and ice, so our system can continue to operate."

Commuter Railroads

With snow totals forecast to be highest in the suburbs, especially north of the city, Metro-North Railroad and the Long Island Rail Road will consider various service options due to the vast coverage of service areas and severity of the storm.

Snow-fighting equipment is winterized, tested and positioned strategically throughout both railroads. Protective heat circuits are verified to be operational, air brake lines are purged of any moisture to prevent them from freezing and electric trains are fitted with special third rail shoes to prevent snow from accumulating.

Metro-North Railroad

Metro-North is closely monitoring conditions and may modify or suspend service if snowfall is heavy. In ice storms, blizzards, or sustained winds over 39 mph, train service may be severely curtailed or suspended, especially if there are frozen switches, downed trees, or a loss of third rail or overhead catenary power.

Metro-North Railroad installed third rail snow shoes on its electric trains to scrape ice off of exposed third rails, shrouds exposed train couplers with snow covers to keep snow out, treats exposed shoes with de-icer, and sprays door panels with an anti-freeze agent.

"We are monitoring the forecasts carefully, hoping for the best but preparing for the worst," said **Metro-North Railroad President Catherine Rinaldi**. "Our crews will be deployed before, during and after the storm to combat the weather and ensure we can operate service safely."

Metro-North Railroad has the following snow-fighting equipment ready to go, strategically located at facilities around the system:

- 1,816 ice scraper railcar mounted contact “shoes”
- 635 track switch heaters / melters
- 220 portable snowblowers / throwers
- 196 portable generators
- 146 chainsaws
- 70 Truck-Mountable Snow Plows / Salt Spreaders
- 21 front loaders
- 20 backhoes
- 20 excavators
- Six dump trucks
- Six cold-air rail snow blowers / throwers
- Three emergency response trailers
- Two rail-bound snow brooms

Along the tracks, switches – the interlocking tracks that allow rail traffic controllers to route trains from one track to another – are treated with an anti-freeze agent and lubricated. Metro-North Railroad uses electric switch heaters.

Long Island Rail Road

To help allow crews to attend to weather-related conditions and in anticipation of reduced ridership, the Long Island Rail Road will operate on an enhanced weekend schedule for Thursday, Dec. 17.

Since the LIRR Forward plan was announced in May 2018, the railroad has prioritized initiatives to improve the railroad's efforts to fight weather events that can disrupt service. The LIRR has installed 86 switch snow covers, replaced 332 utility poles alongside the tracks, insulated 38 switches, installed 3,304 M7 weather-resistant doorway threshold plates and replaced 16,000 feet of cable in the Atlantic Avenue Tunnel to make it resistant to salt-water intrusion since the beginning of the program.

“The core of the LIRR Forward plan is the recognition of the need to be prepared for difficult situations,” **said LIRR President Phil Eng.** “We know that we cannot control Mother Nature. But we can minimize service impacts and recover more quickly from storms by being as prepared as possible.”

Long Island Rail Road has the following snow-fighting equipment located at various yards around the system ready for deployment:

- 978,000 lbs. of de-icing material
- More than 22,000 linear feet of third rail heater
- 262 portable snowblowers / throwers
- 250 cars equipped with ice scrapers / contact shoes
- 235 chainsaws
- 167 portable generators
- 28 front loaders
- 25 cubic yards of sand
- 25 torches
- 17 box trucks
- 10 dump trucks
- Eight truck-mountable snow plows / salt spreaders
- Four de-icer trains
- Five excavators
- Three backhoe loaders
- Three cold-air rail snow blowers / throwers
- Two forklifts

Along the right-of-way, switches – the interlocking tracks that allow rail traffic controllers to route trains from one track to another – are treated with an anti-freeze agent and lubricated. Long Island Rail Road has switch heaters with natural gas burners at Jamaica Station and electrical heating elements at switches around the system.

Long Island Rail Road may modify or suspend service if snowfall is heavy. In ice storms, blizzards, or sustained winds over 39 mph, train service may be severely curtailed or suspended, especially if there are frozen switches or there is a loss of third rail power.

New York City Subway and Staten Island Railway

While the underground portions of the system remain unaffected during snowstorms, there are nearly 220 miles of outdoor track throughout the boroughs. The Rockaway , Sea Beach , Flushing , Brighton  and Dyre Av  Lines are particularly vulnerable to snow and freezing precipitation. To prevent subway trains from being blocked in yards, they will be moved and stored underground in anticipation of heavy snow or ice. This will impact service on lines with express service.

“New York City Transit has been planning for this storm for days,” **said Interim President of MTA New York City Transit Sarah Feinberg.** “This is an all-hands-on-deck event, and we are ready to respond no matter how the weather evolves.”

New York City Transit has a yellow-hued fleet of snow and ice-fighting equipment designed to keep outdoor tracks, switches and third rails clear of snow and ice. Super-powered snow throwers, jet-powered snow-blowers, and de-icing cars – retired subway cars modified with tanks and other specialized

equipment to spray de-icing fluid on the third rail -- are ready for immediate deployment.

NYC Transit resources strategically deployed for the storm include:

- More than 236,000 lbs. of de-icing material
- 9,300 gallons of diesel fuel
- 4,300 gallons of gasoline
- 2,770 ice scraper shoes
- 259 third rail heaters / melters
- 249 track switch heaters / melters
- 230 portable generators
- 218 jet engine powered blowers / snow melters
- 129 portable snowblowers / throwers
- 126 chainsaws
- 60 emergency response vehicles or road service trucks
- 56 box trucks
- 43 forklifts
- 42 torches
- 14 dump trucks
- 11 de-icer trains
- Eight truck mountable snow plows / salt spreaders
- Six front loaders
- Five excavators
- Four debris-clearing trains
- Three backhoe loaders

New York City Buses

Due to predicted high levels of snow accumulation, buses will operate reduced service based on anticipated lower ridership. All local buses will also be fitted with tire chains. Articulated buses will be replaced by shorter buses starting Wednesday morning.

"We will monitor the weather carefully so that we can respond nimbly and quickly to changing conditions," said **President of the MTA Bus Company and Senior Vice President for Buses for MTA New York City Transit Craig Cipriano**. "Provision of bus service depends on roadway conditions and we will carefully coordinate with the New York City Department of Sanitation and be ready to supplement snow clearance from bus routes with MTA resources."

In addition, New York City Transit and the MTA Bus Co. has 35 snow fighters in our fleet, which operate on predetermined routes to quickly reach highly trafficked areas such as terminals, lay-over locations, facilities and known hotspots.

Bus managers have technology that tracks service when it falls below minimum expected levels on any route, allowing them to make decisions more quickly. Bus service will be adjusted based on road conditions around the city and service curtailments on a route-by-route basis are possible.

MTA New York City Transit's Department of Buses, and the MTA Bus Company have these pieces of equipment and supplies on hand to fight the storm:

- More than 800,000 gallons of diesel fuel
- More than 338,000 lbs. of de-icing material
- 28,000 gallons of gasoline
- 83 box trucks
- 77 truck-mountable snow plows / salt spreaders
- 57 portable snow blowers / throwers
- 40 emergency response vehicles / road service trucks
- 36 bucket trucks
- 22 dump trucks
- 22 wreckers / tow trucks
- 14 portable generators
- Two fuel tanker trucks

MTA Bridges and Tunnels

To ensure safe roadway conditions at the MTA's seven bridges and two tunnels, an empty and tandem tractor tailer ban will be implemented beginning at 4 p.m. on Wednesday.

Bridges and Tunnels assembled many pieces of snow fighting equipment and material.

- 8,300 tons of salt
- 50 portable snow blowers / throwers
- 74 truck mountable snow plows / salt spreaders
- 54 dump trucks
- 45 portable generators
- 31 front loaders
- 31 wreckers / tow trucks
- 25 variable message signs

- 23 bucket trucks
- 17 weather monitoring stations
- 14 light tow vehicles
- 12 chainsaws
- 10 forklifts
- 10 torches
- 10 car carrier trailers

Bridges are equipped with embedded roadway sensors for temperature and above-ground atmospheric sensors that deliver real-time information on wind velocity, wind direction, humidity and precipitation via wireless communication. These sensors record data used to determine if speed restrictions are necessary.

“Our crews are ready to clear snow and ice and deploy salt and sand on our roadway surfaces, and to help any motorists who may need assistance,” **said President of MTA Bridges and Tunnels Daniel F. DeCrescenzo Jr.** “We are ready to do what it takes to provide a safe motoring environment across our facilities, but we will also be monitoring conditions in real time throughout the event and will be ready to implement weather-related restrictions if needed at any or all of our facilities.”

Customers are encouraged to sign up for customer alerts by visiting www.mymtaalerts.com.

Access-A-Ride

Access-A-Ride customers may experience additional travel and wait times. Depending on conditions, customers may want to reconsider travel, unless medically necessary. For Access-A-Ride paratransit service, a dashboard storm monitoring system is in place to track immobilized vehicles and customers.

New York City Transit has also coordinated a procedure with New York City first-responders and the Office of Emergency Management for rescuing customers on immobilized vehicles or those who develop medical needs during storms. Also in place is a paratransit-specific Storm Action Plan that includes processes for curtailing all non-medically essential service.

Customers should check new.mta.info for updates and modified emergency schedules.