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Press Release

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[MTA Headquarters](#)

IMMEDIATE

### MTA Prepares for First Winter Storm of the Year

With a wintry blast that may dump as much as 12 inches of snow in parts of the metropolitan region, the Metropolitan Transportation Authority is hard at work to ensure safe, reliable service this weekend. MTA New York City Transit, Metro-North Railroad, Long Island Rail Road, and MTA Bridges and Tunnels are once again preparing. Personnel will be ready to drop salt and clear platforms and stairs of snow but customers are urged to use extreme caution while navigating the system, especially on outdoor platforms and stairs.

The MTA follows well-established plans to keep the region's transit services up and running during harsh winter weather conditions. MTA personnel will continue to monitor the U.S. National Weather Service and have direct access to a customized weather prediction service that provides regularly updated weather forecasts. From forecast to clean-up, North America's largest mass transit provider will respond accordingly with an army of dedicated workers and a fleet of heavy equipment built for snow-fighting duty.

"We will make every effort to keep our services up and running so that our customers can get to where they need to be," said MTA Chairman and CEO Thomas F. Prendergast. "We have a tremendous investment in equipment, manpower and experience. However, we will only provide service as long as it's safe to do so. There may come a point throughout the winter months when it is no longer prudent to roll out buses or send trains onto some outdoor sections of the lines."

#### NYCT Subways

The Incident Command Center will be activated Friday night at 8 p.m. Personnel will be stationed to communicate with outlying local storm fighting centers, coordinating the overall snow-fighting effort. NYCT has refined procedures at the Incident Command Center upgrading a tool for tracking field reports on snow removal and station conditions, as well as a database of essential resources such as salt, sand, and generators to enable better collaboration and response time.

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. In addition, all scheduled weekend work has been canceled. However, if the storm tracks south and snow accumulation is minimal, NYCT may proceed with some work.

The Department of Subways has a yellow-hued fleet of snow and ice-busting 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. Based on the current forecast, workers will be held after their regular shifts and additional personnel will be brought in prior to the beginning of the storm. Approximately 1,000 track workers will be deployed during the storm in addition to 800 station workers to keep stairs and platforms clear of snow. Personnel will have access to 262,500 pounds of calcium chloride and 200,000 pounds of sand to melt snow and ice.

While the underground portions of the system remain unaffected during snowstorms, there are nearly 220 miles of outdoor track throughout the boroughs. The Rockaway [A S](#), Sea Beach [N](#), Flushing [7](#), Brighton [B Q](#) and Dyre Av [5](#) Lines are particularly vulnerable to snow and freezing precipitation. NYCT resources strategically deployed for the storm include:

- 10 snow-throwers
- 7 de-icers
- 4 jet blowers
- 8 R156 diesel locomotives
- 22 heated/insulated work cars
- 79 trains placed into service with scraper shoes, which help reduce icing on the third rail

NYCT has also added more third rail heaters and snow melting equipment at critical points throughout the system. There are currently 1,084 remote-controlled, and 494 manual third-rail heaters as well as snow melting devices at 500 switch and 700 signal locations to keep trains moving.

#### NYCT and MTA Bus

The Department of Buses has expanded the testing and evaluation of all-season tires on the bus fleet. Currently 60% of standard buses and the entire articulated fleet have been fitted with these tires that are designed to provide additional grip in snowy weather. However, out of an abundance of caution due to predicted high levels of snow accumulation, buses will also be fitted with tire chains. Articulated buses will be replaced by shorter buses starting Friday night.

This year's weather plan has been updated to include new snow-fighting equipment, bringing the total number of snow fighters to 37 in our fleet. Predetermined routes have been mapped for this snow-fighting equipment to quickly reach highly trafficked locations for buses such as terminals, lay-over locations, facilities and known hotspots.

The Department of Buses also coordinates closely and shares information with the Department of Sanitation to keep routes passable.

Bus managers now have new 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.

### **Metro-North Railroad & Long Island Rail Road**

Snow-fighting equipment is winterized, tested and positioned strategically throughout both railroads to start operation as soon as snow accumulations begin. 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 covers exposed couplers to keep snow out, treats exposed shoes with de-icer, and sprays door panels with an anti-freeze agent.

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

- 1 Spreader/Ditcher
- 3 Cold Air Blowers to clear main track, yards and third rail
- 2 Stabilizer/Brooms used to clear excessive snow from rails
- 7 Rail-bound Jets and 2 hi-rail jets (total 9 jet snow blowers)
- 2 Pickup Truck Plow/Spreaders
- 151 Snowblowers

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

- 1 Front-end Loader with thrower
- 5 Backhoes
- 6 Cold Air Blowers
- 3 Rail-bound Jets
- 2 Tractor Blower/Spreaders
- 70 Pickup Truck Plows
- 216 Snowblowers

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. Metro-North Railroad uses propane switch heaters and activates heating rods. Switches are continually moved by rail traffic controllers to keep them from freezing shut.

Extra personnel at both railroads are positioned at numerous locations to pre-salt platforms and stairways before the storm begins and to clear them of snow during and after the storm. Both railroads must consider various service options due to the vast coverage of service areas and severity of the storm.

Long Island Rail Road may modify or suspend service if snowfall is heavy, 10-13 inches or more. 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. Long Island Rail Road has four modified schedules for storm recovery.

Metro-North Railroad impact to service is not just determined by the amount of snow that falls, but also by the age of equipment and the condition of infrastructure, especially evident on the New Haven Line where there is 100-year-old catenary and moveable bridges. Service options include reductions of service and temporary suspensions of service.

Pertinent information regarding service on both railroads is available via customer email alerts, website updates, station announcements, platform display message boards, as well as message boards at key terminals.

### **Paratransit**

Paratransit 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.

NYC 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 [mta.info](https://www.mta.info) for updates and modified emergency schedules.

### **Bridges and Tunnels**

Extra managerial staff will be activated and the Command Center will be operating their weather desks throughout the snow event. These include:

- Operations Section Post: Desk will be staffed by a uniformed supervisor to handle weather related operational issues and to keep a detailed record of all storm activities;
- Logistics Section Post: Desk will be staffed by a member of the Maintenance Division to track snow removal equipment, assist with storm tracking and to analyze and redeploy resources as conditions necessitate.

Bridges and Tunnels has 9,180 tons of roadway deicer on hand and 100 pieces of snow-fighting equipment in service and available for storm fighting operations. Staffing will be kept at a maximum level to assist with mitigation of snow and ice build-up as well as to sustain the normal operation of the 7 bridges and both tunnels.

Bridges also 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.

To enhance our communications with customers, the MTA has taken steps to insure its communications systems function well during any type of emergency. The current website design allows for the quick posting of service information and includes a special weather page that becomes the [mta.info](http://mta.info) homepage during weather-related events affecting operations.

Customers can view the Winter Weather Guide available at <http://web.mta.info/coldWeather/> The Winter Weather Guide is a handy guide to keep customers informed during periods of inclement weather that may require service changes. The poster provides information about service on each of the MTA's agencies with a description of the weather condition and how that weather may affect operations.

Customers are urged to monitor [mta.info](http://mta.info) regularly as well as television and radio for service updates. Customers can also sign up for customer alerts by visiting [www.mtamyalerts.com](http://www.mtamyalerts.com).

#### **Addendum: Description of Subway Snow-Fighting Equipment**

*Snow Throwers* - Precise directional snow-throwing equipment. Includes a two-stage impeller and side mounted rotating brushes to throw snow up to 200 feet; can remove 3,000 tons of snow an hour. This is similar to a household snow-blower, just a lot bigger.

*Jet Blowers* - This equipment uses a jet engine to remove accumulated snow from the roadbed and deposit it a distance from the tracks so that it cannot slide back. This piece of equipment is used primarily to keep the yards clear.

*De-Icer Cars* - Equipped with scraper shoes that scrape off ice and also uses pumping equipment to dispense a stream of nontoxic, biodegradable de-icing fluid to prevent ice buildup on the third rail. If ice is permitted to build up, subway car power pickup equipment will not be able to draw electric current from the third rail and the train will stop.

*Work Cars* - Heated/Insulated work cars that can be used to carry crews and equipment to snow removal work sites. These cars are equipped with ice-scraping equipment to help keep the third rail clear. These cars are also designated Storm Emergency Train (SET) Riders, which can be used to rescue passengers if stranded.

*Diesel Locomotives* - All Diesel Locomotives are equipped with a small snow plow at both ends to assist in scraping snow and ice off the road bed and transporting the other snow removal work cars. Additional diesel locomotives are also equipped with shoe beams that allow crews to mount scraper shoes for third-rail de-icing.