Winter storm for March 5

The following was issued Thursday, March 5 during the noon hour by Charles County Government

Rain Changing to Sleet and Snow throughout Charles County
Local government preparing to respond to storm

Precipitation across the area will continue to change over from rain to sleet and snow this afternoon and residents are asked to stay off the roads if possible. The National Weather Service has indicated that, even though snow totals for most of the state have been reduced, Charles County is expected to receive 4 to 8 inches of snow during the height of the storm on Thursday.

“The weather in Maryland will be bad today, and we are urging everyone to use common sense and stay safe,” said Department of Emergency Services Director William Stephens. “With federal and state government and local school systems closed, less people should be on the roads, but if you have to go into work or travel, please drive as cautiously as possible and give road crews space to operate.”

Local emergency management and state agencies are ready to assist local responders with any issues related to the storm. After the snow begins, temperatures are expected to stay below freezing until Saturday. This could inhibit melting and make prolonged outdoor exposure a safety concern.

As weather conditions deteriorate today, if you do not need to drive, please stay off the roads. If you begin losing traction while you drive, pull over but do not abandon your vehicle on the highway, if possible. If you must drive, travelers may obtain the latest free traffic and weather information by calling 5-1-1 from a telephone or visiting www.MD511.org or www.traffic.md.gov.

Severe weather notices are posted online at www.CharlesCountyMD.gov, on CCGTV cable television (Verizon channel 10 and Comcast channel 95), on Facebook and on Twitter. Sign up for the Citizen Notification System (CNS) at www.CharlesCountyMD.gov/CNS to receive inclement weather notifications by email or text message. For weather-related roads inquiries, call 888-460-SNOW (7669). For updated information on power outages, view the SMECO outage map at stormcenter.smeco.coop. Call 877-747-6326 to report a power outage. Call 9-1-1 in the event of an emergency.

Additionally, weather, power outage alerts, and winter preparedness information, can be accessed on the Maryland Emergency Management Agency’s website at mema.maryland.gov. Mobile device users can also download the free Maryland Prepares app.

Previous advisories
CHARLES-CALVERT-GREENE-MADISON-ORANGE-CULPEPER-STAFFORD- SOUTHERN FAUQUIER- INCLUDING THE CITIES OF...WALDORF...CULPEPER 451 AM EST WED MAR 4

2015 ...WINTER STORM WARNING IN EFFECT FROM MIDNIGHT TONIGHT TO 9 PM EST THURSDAY...

THE NATIONAL WEATHER SERVICE IN BALTIMORE MD/WASHINGTON HAS ISSUED A WINTER STORM WARNING FOR HEAVY SNOW...WHICH IS IN EFFECT FROM MIDNIGHT TONIGHT TO 9 PM EST THURSDAY.

ACCUMULATIONS...SNOW 4 TO 8 INCHES...ALONG WITH A TRACE OF ICE. * LOCATIONS...SOUTHERN MARYLAND TO NORTH-CENTRAL VIRGINIA. * HAZARD TYPES...WINTRY MIX...THEN ALL SNOW...HEAVY AT TIMES. * TIMING...RAIN CHANGES TO WINTRY MIX AROUND MIDNIGHT THEN ALL SNOW THROUGH THURSDAY. SNOW HEAVIEST LATE TONIGHT THROUGH THURSDAY AFTERNOON. * IMPACTS...ROADS WILL BE SNOW COVERED...VISIBILITIES WILL DROP TO AROUND A QUARTER-MILE AT TIMES...MAKING TRAVEL DANGEROUS. * WINDS...NORTH 10 TO 15 MPH WITH GUSTS UP TO 25 MPH. * TEMPERATURES...LOW 30S...DROPPING INTO THE 20S THURSDAY. PRECAUTIONARY/PREPAREDNESS ACTIONS...A WINTER STORM WARNING FOR HEAVY SNOW MEANS SEVERE WINTER WEATHER CONDITIONS ARE EXPECTED OR OCCURRING. SIGNIFICANT AMOUNTS OF SNOW ARE FORECAST THAT WILL MAKE TRAVEL DANGEROUS. ONLY TRAVEL IN AN EMERGENCY. IF YOU MUST TRAVEL...KEEP AN EXTRA FLASHLIGHT... FOOD...AND WATER IN YOUR VEHICLE IN CASE OF AN EMERGENCY.

Maryland State Police issued this statement March 4 at 1:30 p.m.

Pikesville, MD – Maryland State Police, in coordination with, the State Highway Administration, and other local agencies prepare for the approaching snow storm.

Colonel William M. Pallozzi, Acting Superintendent of the Maryland State Police, reminds motorists to use caution due to the possibility of hazardous driving conditions that may arise from the pending snow storm. Colonel Pallozzi has also ordered barrack commanders across the state to be prepared to assess road conditions in their area and to deploy troopers as needed. Additional troopers, not normally assigned to road patrol, along with the State Highway Administration’s Coordinated Highway Action Response Team, C.H.A.R.T., will combine their efforts to assist disabled motorists as quickly as possible.

Troopers encourage motorist to use their best judgment when driving during rush hour on Thursday morning, when the snow is predicted to be at its heaviest. When there is a high volume of traffic on the roads, traffic is at a stand still. If traffic is at a stand still, snow plows are at a stand still and the roads do not get plowed.

Drivers are reminded of road restrictions if a snow emergency plan is activated in their county. If declared, parking is prohibited on highways and roads designated as snow emergency routes. During snow storms, abandoned and disabled vehicles cause major problems for snow removal and for troopers attempting to respond to emergency incidents. Maryland State Troopers encourage those who do not have to travel during the storm to stay off the roads. If it is necessary to travel, make sure your vehicle is in good working order and properly equipped with mud and snow tires or chains. It is also smart to have an
emergency roadside kit in your vehicle.

In case of power failures, motorists are reminded of Maryland’s law concerning non-functioning traffic lights. The law requires all drivers approaching an intersection with a non-functioning signal to stop. Drivers may continue only after they have yielded to any vehicles or pedestrians already in the intersection. They must remain stopped until the intersection is clear and it is safe to proceed.

The latest traffic conditions, including road closures due to snow or ice will be available on-line at www.511md.org or by calling 5-1-1. Road conditions and views of the live traffic cameras are also available on the State Highway Administration website at www.roads.maryland.gov. Citizens are urged not to call Maryland State Police barracks simply to check on road conditions. Calls to police or 9-1-1 centers during the storm should be for emergency situations only.

Commercial vehicles are invited to wait out the storm at one of the Maryland State Police scale house parking lots that will be available overnight. Motorists are reminded if they abandon their vehicles on the interstate or on state roads, their vehicle will be towed. These vehicles need to be removed so they will not inhibit snow removal efforts.

SHA evening update

The Maryland Department of Transportation’s State Highway Administration (SHA) is preparing for a storm Thursday that is forecasted to drop more than six inches of snow throughout the region. Since the storm will start as rain, SHA is not pre-treating roads with brine because it would wash away. Staff at the Statewide Operations Center will monitor conditions and deploy resources as needed.

“With the storm starting overnight, it is important for commuters to plan ahead and make sound judgments about driving or not in the morning. If you do choose to drive, be sure your vehicle can maneuver in the snow. Just one abandoned car can create a traffic jam that impacts everyone, including our plow trucks,” said SHA Administrator Melinda B. Peters. “SHA anticipates plowing roads as snow begins to accumulate. If you encounter our crews or emergency responders, please leave plenty of following distance and never try to pass plows.”

More than 2,700 personnel (state and contract) and 2,400 pieces of equipment are available statewide. To date, SHA has spent $95 million on winter operations and used 285,000 tons of salt.

SHA will deploy six heavy duty tow trucks across the Baltimore/Washington metropolitan region to assist disabled tractor trailers along the interstates. In storms that produce six inches or more of snow, truckers can safely ride out the storm. An emergency truck parking map is available on the SHA website.

SHA crews will plow and salt as needed, but motorists must modify driving behavior for conditions. Drivers should slow down, use caution, allow plenty of distance between vehicles, use snow tires and allow plenty of time for travel. Visit http://www.md511.org/ and www.traffic.md.gov or call 511 for traffic information.

SHA maintains the numbered roads in Maryland with the exception of those on Baltimore City or tolled roads (including the ICC, I-95 north of Baltimore City, the Chesapeake Bay Bridge etc. Click here to obtain information for county roads departments.

Customers may also follow SHA on Twitter @MDSHA and ‘like’ us on Facebook.

SMECO ADVISORY

Prepare for Weather-Related Outages

Southern Maryland faces potential severe winter weather tonight and tomorrow. Area residents are urged to take steps to prepare for possible weather-related power outages. Southern Maryland Electric Cooperative (SMECO) is monitoring weather forecasts, and co-op crews are prepared to restore power if outages occur.

According to SMECO spokesperson Tom Dennison, “Although the severity of the storm is uncertain, our SMECO personnel and contractor crews are prepared and our inventory is well-stocked.” Dennison added, “If customers experience a power outage, they have a number of easy ways to report their outage. They can call 1-877-74-SMECO (1-877-747-6326), go online to our website, www.smeco.coop, or use our SMS text messaging service. We also have a SMECO 24/7 mobile app that is available in the Apple app store and Google Play. This free app will allow customers to report an outage, view our outage map, or make a payment. Customers can use the app on their smart phone or tablet computer.” Customer-members can get more information about the app and text messaging service on SMECO’s website at http://www.smeco.coop/ourServices/SMECO247.aspx.

SMECO’s outage restoration policy is to make repairs that will restore service to the most people in the least amount of time. Transmission lines and substations are repaired first, followed by distribution lines that feed neighborhoods. Tap lines and individual service lines are then repaired to restore power to customers who may still be without electricity.

Customers can view a two-minute video, “Preparing for a Power Outage” to help them take steps to get ready in case an outage occurs. Customers can see the video on the co-op’s website at www.smeco.coop.

The following is a list of steps customers can take to prepare for power interruptions.

• If someone in your household depends on electricity to operate life support systems, make plans for alternate sources of power or alternate lodging. For county shelter information, call SMECO’s special needs number: 1-866-524-9402. In addition, check with your local fire department, which may offer temporary shelter.
• Keep flashlights and fresh batteries on hand. Lanterns and candles are not recommended because they can cause fires.
• Stock nonperishable foods and keep a manual opener handy. The ideal choices are foods that require no cooking, such as fruit, canned tuna, peanut butter, crackers, cereals, cereal bars, canned soup, and bread.
• Do not stock your refrigerator or freezer with foods that may perish during a power outage.
• If you plan to use a charcoal or gas grill for cooking, keep the grill outdoors.
• If your water at home is supplied by a well, store extra water in clean jugs, bathtubs, or laundry tubs.
• Keep a battery-powered radio with fresh batteries and stay tuned to local news bulletins and weather reports.
• Make sure that you have a standard phone available. Cordless phones do not work without electricity. If you use a cell phone, an auto adapter may be needed to recharge your phone.
• If you plan to use a portable generator, use extension cords to connect what you want to power directly to the generator. Place your generator outside, not in an attic, crawl space, or basement. Carbon monoxide poisoning is deadly. Make sure your generator is connected safely; a generator that is not connected safely can cause serious injury or death. When your power comes back on, turn off and disconnect your generator immediately.

• Keep your automobile gas tank above half full.

• Keep fresh batteries in your smoke detectors.

• As in preparing for any other emergency, maintain a supply of cash. Credit cards and ATM machines may not work if the power is out.

If your power goes out:

• Call SMECO’s Outage Hotline at 1-877-74-SMECO or 1-877-747-6326. Customers may also download the SMECO 24/7 app, use SMECO’s text messaging service, or go to the co-op’s website to report the outage online. [http://www.smeco.coop/ourServices/SMECO247.aspx](http://www.smeco.coop/ourServices/SMECO247.aspx)

• Never touch downed power lines or attempt to remove trees from power lines. Contact with live lines may result in serious injury or death. Let qualified SMECO crews handle the clearing and repair work. Please report downed power lines to SMECO immediately by calling 1-888-440-3311.

• Open the freezer and refrigerator as little as possible. This will help food stay fresh longer.

• Make sure the oven and stove are off to prevent fires if the power comes back on while you’re away.

• Turn off all the major appliances in your home, especially the heat pump. This will prevent damage to the appliances once the power is restored. Then, try not to turn everything back on at once; turn on appliances gradually so the electric demand does not jump suddenly.