Severe Weather Incident Annex

Annex Approval and Implementation

Wisconsin Emergency Management has coordinated an update to this of the Wisconsin Emergency Response Plan. This annex will be reviewed in accordance with the timeline outlined Wisconsin Emergency Management Integrated Preparedness Plan (IPP). If needed, modifications to this annex will be coordinated with appropriate stakeholders and routed through the Adjutant General for approval.

DocuSigned by:
Greg Engle
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Greg Engle, Administrator
Wisconsin Emergency Management

Date: 7/31/2024 | 3:00 PM CDT

This incident annex is hereby adopted as written and supersedes all previous versions.

Signed by:
Brig Gen David May
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DAVID W. MAY, Brigadier General
Interim Adjutant General of Wisconsin

Date: 8/6/2024 | 3:03 PM CDT

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Table 1: Coordinating and Support Agencies

Lead Coordinating Agency	Department of Military Affairs/Wisconsin Emergency Management (DMA/WEM)
Wisconsin Governmental Support Agencies	Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection (DATCP) Department of Health Services (WI DHS) Department of Military Affairs/Wisconsin National Guard (DMA/WING) Department of Natural Resources (DNR) Department of Transportation (WisDOT) Wisconsin Department of Transportation/Traffic Management Center (WisDOT/TMC) Wisconsin Department of Transportation/Wisconsin State Patrol (WisDOT/WSP)
Incident Coordinating Agencies	National Weather Service, Twin Cities/Chanhassen, MN National Weather Service, Duluth, MN National Weather Service, Green Bay, WI National Weather Service, La Crosse, WI National Weather Service, Milwaukee/Sullivan, WI
Federal ESF Coordinating Agency	Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA)

1. Introduction

1.1. Purpose

The Severe Weather Incident Annex outlines the organization, responsibilities, operational concepts, and procedures specific to a state level response to a severe weather incident, when local capabilities are overwhelmed. When possible, state agency responses to severe weather impacts will be through already-established assignments of responsibility in other Wisconsin Emergency Response Plan (WERP) elements.

1.2. Scope

1.2.1. This plan applies to all severe weather incidents that overwhelm local capabilities and could have serious impacts on the State and its population.

1.2.2. For the purposes of this plan:

1.2.2.1 A “severe weather incident” refers to a weather-related incident that threatens, or causes disruptions to one or more of the following:

A) Public safety

B) State or regional economy

C) Governmental functions

1.2.2.2 “Localized” is used to describe an incident with the following characteristics:

A) Of short duration

B) Adversely affecting a small number of municipalities, tribes, or counties

C) That may cause:

(1) Power outages

(2) Evacuations

(3) Transportation system disruptions that temporarily isolate an affected area and immobilize a population or limit the ability of the population to evacuate, or both

(4) Other adverse consequences within a limited geographical area

1.3. Situation Overview

1.3.1. Severe Weather Types

The Wisconsin Threat and Hazard Identification and Risk Assessment (THIRA) an adjunct to the WERP and Appendix to the Wisconsin Hazard Mitigation Plan (WHMP), identifies 13 hazards that could plausibly occur in the state and would have a significant effect on the state. The THIRA includes an in-depth analysis for each of the identified threats and hazards. Severe weather types include:

1.3.1.1 Severe Weather

Including tornadoes and high winds, hail, and lightning.

1.3.1.2 Flooding

Including dam failure, landslide, and land subsidence.

1.3.1.3 Drought and extreme heat

Note: See WERP Drought Annex for further information on state drought response.

1.3.1.4 Winter storms and extreme cold

1.3.2. Severe Weather Impacts

Severe weather may, in a relatively short period of time, create circumstances that threaten public safety by:

1.3.2.1 Overwhelming local, county, and tribal highway crews.

1.3.2.2 Causing power outages that impact electricity-dependent populations, data systems, and critical infrastructure.

1.3.2.3 Overwhelming storm sewer and wastewater treatment facilities.

1.3.2.4 Impairing or make impassable ingress and egress routes from affected areas.

1.3.2.5 Displacing populations.

A) Transportation resources such as roadways and bridges impairing or making impossible evacuation from, or emergency responder access to, affected areas.

1.4. Planning Assumptions

1.4.1. Severe weather events can occur during any season.

1.4.2. Severe weather usually occurs with some advance warning, however some incidents, such as flash flooding, may occur with very little or no warning.

1.4.3. Severe weather incidents may create significant numbers of people who are temporarily homeless and who require short-term sheltering or moderate-term temporary housing.

1.4.4. During a severe weather incident:

1.4.4.1 A detailed and credible common operating picture may not be immediately available.

1.4.4.2 Initial response activities may begin without complete situational awareness and before the full impact of the incident can be appreciated.

1.4.4.3 Responding agencies must be flexible and scale their activities as the situation warrants.

1.4.5. ESF 5 governs coordination of state support to local jurisdictions during a severe weather incident.

1.4.6. Severe weather incidents involve responders from multiple public safety disciplines. In order to maintain situational awareness and a common operating picture, all responding units should have interoperable communications with the incident command post (ICP) in accordance with ESF 2.

1.4.7. The areas of the state most vulnerable to severe weather are places where people have insufficient shelter and may be difficult to reach with warning messages. Such areas include highways and outdoor places of assembly, such as:

1.4.7.1 Rural areas

1.4.7.2 Fairgrounds

1.4.7.3 Outdoor concert venues

1.4.7.4 Exhibit areas

1.4.7.5 Stadiums, amphitheaters, and other large sports and recreation facilities

1.4.8. Severe weather may directly impact populations in the short or long-term by damaging or destroying:

1.4.8.1 Homes

1.4.8.2 Businesses

1.4.8.3 Public facilities

1.4.8.4 Emergency response equipment and facilities

1.4.9. Severe weather may also indirectly impact populations by damaging or destroying critical infrastructure and key resources assets such as:

1.4.9.1 Hospitals and health care facilities

1.4.9.2 Energy generation or distribution facilities and equipment

1.4.9.3 Water and wastewater treatment facilities and equipment

1.4.9.4 Landline and wireless telecommunications facilities.

1.4.9.5 Internet and data hubs and facilities

2. Concept of Operations

2.1. Monitoring

2.1.1. The Joint Operations Center (JOC) monitors weather conditions across Wisconsin.

2.1.1.1 The NWS offices serving Wisconsin provide WEM with early warning of potential, pending, or occurring severe weather.

2.1.1.2 Emergency managers and volunteer SkyWarn weather observers report severe weather to the JOC through:

A) County, local, and tribal emergency managers or WEM regional directors

B) The 24-hour WEM 800.943.0003 telephone number.

2.1.2. The JOC Standard Operating Guide provides the JOC with standard operating guidelines and procedures to follow when severe weather occurs, threatens, or is predicted. They include:

2.1.2.1 Procedures for webinars, conference calls, and other collaborative meetings intended to apprise state leadership, state agencies, and municipal, county, and tribal emergency managers of potential severe weather.

A) These collaborations are conducted by WEM, in partnership with NWS.

2.1.2.2 Define the means of state agency notification of severe weather incidents in conjunction with individual agency plans unless the SEOC is mobilized.

2.2. Annex Activation

2.2.1. This annex can be activated by WEM management following:

2.2.1.1 A county or tribal emergency manager who requests state-level assistance because local resources are either overwhelmed or are threatened with becoming overwhelmed by current or developing severe weather conditions.

2.2.1.2 A request by a WEM regional director who requests state-level assistance because resources within his/her region are either overwhelmed or are threatened with becoming overwhelmed by current or developing severe weather conditions.

2.2.1.3 Observed or predicted severe weather conditions in the state.

2.2.2. This annex can also be activated:

2.2.2.1 At the direction of the WEM senior duty officer (SDO) who then notifies the WEM administrator, the adjutant general, and the governor's office.

2.2.2.2 At the direction of the WEM administrator who then notifies the adjutant general, and the governor's office.

2.2.2.3 At the direction of the adjutant general who then notifies the governor's office.

2.2.2.4 At the direction of the governor through a declaration of a state of emergency.

A) A governor's declaration of a state of emergency (§ 323.10 of the Wisconsin Statutes) may mobilize members of the Department of Military Affairs (DMA)/Wisconsin National Guard (WING) to assist with response or help with damage assessment resulting from a severe weather incident.

2.2.3. Legal issues arising from activation or execution of this plan are referred to the DMA general counsel.

2.3. SEOC Elevation

2.3.1. WEM management may direct that the SEOC mobilize in response to severe weather that results in:

2.3.1.1 Closure of state or federal highways.

2.3.1.2 Potential or actual impacts to critical infrastructure.

2.3.1.3 Requests for significant quantities of response resources.

2.3.1.4 Involvement of two or more state agencies.

2.3.1.5 Potential or actual extensive or prolonged utility outages.

2.3.2. The SEOC communicates with the public through ESF 15.

2.3.2.1 The DMA Public Affairs Office (PAO) produces information for print and broadcast media, social media, and direct outreach to non-government organization partners who can support communications to individuals with functional needs.

3. Agency Activities

3.1. Wisconsin Department of Transportation

WisDOT has overall responsibility for maintenance of state and federal highways in Wisconsin.

3.1.1. WisDOT contracts with counties and tribes for highway maintenance equipment and personnel resources for the maintenance of state and federal highways.

3.1.1.1 WisDOT does not maintain significant highway maintenance equipment and personnel resources.

3.1.2. The Traffic Management Center (TMC) monitors the condition of state highways throughout Wisconsin using:

3.1.2.1 A network of traffic cameras, and

3.1.2.2 Field reports from WSP, various municipal, county, and tribal agencies and reports from the public.

3.1.3. The TMC analyzes data from these inputs to produce reports on highway impairments which are distributed through:

3.1.3.1 Email bulletins, and

3.1.3.2 Interactive map available to the public through the 511 website (http://www.511wi.gov).

3.2. Municipal, County, and Tribal Jurisdictions

3.2.1. Wisconsin is a home rule state.

3.2.1.1 As required by § 323.14(1) of the Wisconsin Statutes, counties, cities, villages, and towns are required to develop emergency management plans compatible with state plans. These emergency management plans should:

A) Include planning to preposition highway maintenance resources when a severe weather event is imminent. Prepositioning resources decreases the time necessary to deploy when conditions warrant. Note: A “highway” means any public way or thoroughfare.

B) Establish trigger points at which, even with mutual aid resources, highways cannot be kept in safe operational condition. When these trigger points are reached, plans should authorize one or more county officials to:

(1) Contact the appropriate WEM regional director to request assistance in keeping highways in a safe condition.

(2) Contact the TMC to request additional assistance or to declare a road, highway, or a portion of a highway closed. Note: A county sheriff can close roads in his/her respective county including that portion of the interstate in the county.

C) Meet the standards of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) (42 U.S.C. §§12101-12213) and other disability rights laws for physical, programmatic, and communications access (e.g. warnings/notifications, evacuations, sheltering, temporary/interim housing).

3.2.1.2 Pursuant to §323.14(4) of the Wisconsin statutes, counties, cities, villages, and towns have the authority and the responsibility to preserve public safety. Counties and local units of governments are required to have plans, compatible with this plan, to:

A) Rescue persons imperiled by a severe weather incident and move them to a place of safety. Such plans must account for the needs of persons who are not capable of self-rescue in accordance with ESF 1, ESF 13, and ESF 9.

B) Provide appropriate shelter and/or temporary housing as necessary until such time as the emergency has passed and normal conditions are restored in accordance with ESF 6. Such shelters and/or temporary housing must account for the needs of persons with access and functional needs (see glossary) impairing their use of shelter and/or temporary housing facilities.

3.2.2. Municipal, County, and Tribal highway department mutual aid:

3.2.2.1 Jurisdictions are encouraged to enter mutual aid compacts with adjoining jurisdictions to share highway maintenance resources to increase capability to maintain highways in a safe operational condition.

3.2.2.2 Jurisdictions can reasonably determine mutual aid trigger points based on the number of trucks, drivers, maintenance personnel, and maintenance facilities, at which they may not be able to maintain highways in a safe operational condition because resources will be exhausted or overwhelmed.

3.2.2.3 Consistent with standard mutual aid plans, mutual aid resources respond only upon request.

A) When requested, all mutual aid resources operate under the direction of the incident commander through the incident command system.

3.2.3. Incident responders of all disciplines should have common communications means in accordance with ESF 2.

3.2.3.1 Interoperable communications should allow all responders to communicate with each other, with incident command posts, jurisdictional EOCs, or responsible public safety communications centers.

3.2.3.2 Interoperable communications are a matter of responder safety, maintenance of situational awareness, and a common operating picture.

3.2.4. Declaration of Emergency

3.2.4.1 County or municipal declaration of a state of emergency. § 323.11 of the Wisconsin statutes allows any local unit of government to declare an emergency for a disaster or the imminent threat of a disaster that impairs transportation, food or fuel supplies, medical care, fire, health, or police protection or other critical governmental systems for the duration of the emergency.

3.2.4.2 Tribes have the authority to declare an emergency as sovereign nations.

4. Supporting Documents

4.1. Attachments

4.1.1. Emergency Conditions/Action Levels

4.1.2. WisDOT Roadway Condition Terminology

4.2. Agency-Specific Plans and Procedures

4.2.1. Wisconsin Emergency Management Duty Officer Manual

Table 2: Record of Change

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Attachment 1

Severe Weather Watches, Warnings, and Advisories

Severe Weather Watches, Warnings, and Advisories

Table of Contents

1. National Weather Service Products

Each National Weather Service (NWS) Forecast Office issues some or all of the following weather related products as conditions warrant. NWS local offices often collaborate with local partners to determine when an alert should be issued for a local area. Products may be issued as a statement, advisory, watch, or warning.

1.1. General Weather Products

The following are descriptions of commonly used general weather products.

Hazardous Weather Outlook

The Hazardous Weather Outlook is a single source of information regarding expected hazardous weather through seven days. It can include information on severe storms, heavy rain, flooding, tropical storms, winter weather, high winds, fire weather, and marine hazards.

Special Weather Statement

Special Weather Statements provide the public with information concerning ongoing or imminent weather hazards, which require a heightened level of awareness or action, but do not rise to the level of watch, warning, or advisory.

1.2. Extreme Cold Related Products

The following are descriptions of commonly used extreme cold related products.

Frost Advisory

A frost advisory means areas of frost are expected or occurring, posing a threat to sensitive vegetation.

Freeze Watch

Issued when there is a potential for significant, widespread freezing temperatures within the next 24-36 hours. A freeze watch is issued in the autumn until the end of the growing season and in the spring at the start of the growing season.

Freeze Warning

Issued when temperatures are forecasted to go below 32°F for a long period of time. This temperature threshold kills some types of commercial crops and residential plants.

Hard Freeze Warning

Issued when temperatures are expected to drop below 28°F for an extended period of time, killing most types of commercial crops and residential plants.

Wind Chill Advisory

Issued when seasonably cold wind chill values but not extremely cold values are expected or occurring.

Wind Chill Watch

Issued when dangerously cold wind chill values are possible.

Wind Chill Warning

Issued when dangerously cold wind chill values are expected or occurring.

1.3. Flood Related Products

The following are descriptions of commonly used flood related products.

Hydrologic Outlook

Two Types:

1. Short-term (1 to 7 days) Hydrological Outlooks can be issued to alert the public of the potential for flooding in the near-term such as when heavy rainfall is forecast that could result in flooding or aggravate an existing flood if it occurs.
2. Long-term (weeks to months) Hydrological Outlooks may also provide river or reservoir level and/or flow information. This information could be used for water supply concerns or projection of snowmelt flooding.

Coastal/Lakeshore Hazardous Message

Coastal/Lakeshore Hazard Message products provide the public with detailed information on significant coastal/lakeshore events. Coastal/Lakeshore events impact land-based and near shore interests along much of the United States coastline. This product can be issued as a watch, warning, or advisory and follows the same "Be Aware, Be Prepared, Take Action" definitions as with other NWS watch, warning, or advisory products.

A Watch is issued when flooding with significant impacts is possible.

Warnings are issued when flooding posing a serious threat to life and property is occurring, imminent, or highly likely.

Flood Watch

A Flood Watch is issued to indicate current or developing conditions that are favorable for flooding. The occurrence is neither certain nor imminent. A watch is typically issued within several hours to days ahead of the onset of possible flooding. In situations where a river or stream is expected to be the main source of the flooding, forecast confidence may allow for a Flood Watch to be issued several days in advance.

Flash Flood Watch

A Flash Flood Watch is issued to indicate current or developing conditions that are favorable for flash flooding. The occurrence is neither certain nor imminent. A watch is typically issued within several hours to days ahead of the onset of possible flash flooding.

Flood Advisory

A Flood Advisory is issued when a flood event warrants notification but is less urgent than a warning. Advisories are issued for conditions that could cause a significant inconvenience, and if caution is not exercised, could lead to situations that may threaten life, property, or both.

Flood Warning

A Flood Warning is issued to inform the public of flooding that poses a serious threat to life, property, or both. A Flood Warning may be issued hours to days in advance of the onset of flooding based on forecast conditions. Floods occurring along a river usually contain river stage (level) forecasts.

Flash Flood Warning

A Flash Flood Warning is issued to inform the public, emergency management, and other cooperating agencies that flash flooding is in progress, imminent, or highly likely. Flash Flood Warnings are urgent messages as dangerous flooding can develop very rapidly, with serious threat to life, property, or both. Flash Flood Warnings are usually issued minutes to hours in advance of the onset of flooding.

1.4. Heat Related Products

The following are descriptions of commonly used heat related products.

Excessive Heat Watches

Heat Watches are issued when conditions are favorable for an excessive heat event in the next 24 to 72 hours. A Heat Watch is used when the risk of a heat wave has increase but its occurrence and timing is still uncertain.

Heat Advisory

A Heat Advisory is issued within 12-36 hours of the onset of extremely dangerous heat conditions. The criteria for a Heat Advisory is a peak Heat Index of 100F or a peak Heat Index of 95-99F for a 4 day period. These criteria vary across the country.

Excessive Heat Warning

An Excessive Heat Warning is issued within 12-36 hours of the onset of extremely dangerous heat conditions. The criteria for an Excessive Heat Warning is a peak Heat

Index of 105F, with night time Heat Index not dropping below 75F on either side of it, or a peak Heat Index of 100-104F for a 4 day period. These criteria vary across the country.

1.5. Marine Related Products

The following are descriptions of commonly used marine related products.

Small Craft Advisory

Issued for the Great Lakes Nearshore Zones within 5 miles of the coast. Winds between 24 to 33 knots with waves averaging 4 feet.

Gale Warning

Issued for the Great Lakes nearshore and open waters zones for winds of 34 knots (39 mph) to 47 knots (54 mph).

Storm Warning

Issued for the Great Lakes nearshore and open waters zones for winds of 48 knots (55mph) to 63 knots (73 mph).

Special Marine Warning

A warning issued for potentially hazardous conditions on the Great Lakes, usually of short duration (2 hours or less) producing sustained marine thunderstorm winds or associated gusts of 34 knots or great, and/or hail 3/4 inch or more in diameter, and/or waterspouts.

1.6. Severe Thunderstorm Related Products

The following are descriptions of commonly used severe thunderstorm related products.

Severe Thunderstorm Watch

Severe thunderstorms are possible in and near the watch area. Winds 58 mph or higher or hail 1 inch or larger, or both, are possible. A Severe Thunderstorm watch area is typically large, covering numerous counties or even states.

Severe Thunderstorm Warning

Severe weather has been reported by spotters or indicated by radar or is imminent in the warning area. Warnings indicate imminent danger to life and property. Severe thunderstorms have winds 58 mph or higher or hail 1 inch or larger, or both. Warnings typically encompass a much smaller area (around the size of a city or small county) that may be impacted by a large hail or damaging wind identified by an NWS forecaster on radar or by a trained spotter/law enforcement who is watching the storm.

1.7. Tornado Related Products

The following are descriptions of commonly used tornado related products.

Tornado Watch

Tornadoes are possible in and near the watch area. Watches are issued by the Storm Prediction Center for counties where tornadoes may occur. The watch area is typically large, covering numerous counties or even states.

Tornado Warning

A tornado has been sighted or indicated by weather radar. There is imminent danger to life and property. Warnings typically encompass a much smaller area (around the size of a city or small county) that may be impacted by a tornado identified by a forecaster on Radar or by a trained spotter/law enforcement who is watching the storm.

1.8. Winter Weather Related Products

The following are descriptions of commonly used winter weather related products.

Wind Chill Watches

Issued when there is the potential for a combination of extremely cold air and strong winds to create dangerously low wind chill values. See the NWS Wind Chill Chart.

Winter Storm Watches

Issued when conditions are favorable for a significant winter storm event (i.e., heavy sleet, heavy snow, ice storm, blizzard conditions, heavy snow and blowing snow or a combination of events).

Wind Chill Advisories

Issued when low wind chill temperatures are expected but will not reach local warning criteria. Extremely cold air and strong winds will combine to generate low wind chill readings. Take precautions against frostbite and hypothermia. See the NWS Wind Chill Chart.

Winter Weather Advisories

Issued when snow, blowing snow, ice, sleet, or a combination of these wintry elements are expected but conditions should not be hazardous enough to meet warning criteria. Be prepared for winter driving conditions and possible travel difficulties. Use caution when driving.

Blizzard Warnings

Issued for frequent gusts greater than or equal to 35 mph accompanied by falling and/or blowing snow, frequently reducing visibility to less than 1/4 mile for three hours or more.

A Blizzard Warning means severe winter weather conditions are expected or occurring. Falling and blowing snow with strong winds and poor visibilities are likely, leading to whiteout conditions making travel extremely difficult. Do not travel. If you must travel, have a winter survival kit with you. If you get stranded, stay with your vehicle and wait for help to arrive.

Ice Storm Warnings

Usually issued for ice accumulation of around 1/4 inch or more. This amount of ice accumulation will make travel dangerous or impossible and likely lead to snapped power lines and falling tree branches. Travel is strongly discouraged.

Wind Chill Warning

Issued for a combination of very cold air and strong winds that will create dangerously low wind chill values. This level of wind chill will result in frostbite and lead to hypothermia if precautions are not taken. Avoid going outdoors and wear warm protective clothing if you must venture outside. See the NWS Wind Chill Chart.

Winter Storm Warnings

Issued for a significant winter weather event including snow, ice, sleet or blowing snow or a combination of these hazards. Travel will become difficult or impossible in some situations. Delay your travel plans until conditions improve.

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Attachment 2

Severe Weather

WisDOT Roadway Condition Terminology

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1. WisDOT Winter Weather Roadway Definitions

18-Hour Service Roadways

When conditions warrant, coverage should be provided up to 18 hours per day during the storm. The gap in coverage is necessary to provide for operator recovery time. The operator recovery time should typically be between the hours of 10:00 p.m. and 4:00 a.m., but will vary with specific storm conditions. Some minimal ability to respond to emergencies should be provided during the hours that full coverage is not provided. Typically, a plow operator's time should not exceed a continuous 18-hour shift. Cycle times for each route should generally not exceed 2 ½ to 3 hours.

24-Hour Service Roadways

The county has a presence on the highway for 24 hours per day during a winter storm event unless passable roadway conditions have been achieved. This would only happen during winter storm events of long duration and when conditions warrant. When this does occur it may mean further reducing the coverage on routes in the "all other" classification to assure available manpower, or extending the winter operation section lengths on the high volume routes. However, continuous coverage does not mean that the county runs three shifts or that there are patrol trucks on the highway 24 hours per day throughout the winter irrespective of the weather conditions.

All Other Highway Classification

Include all those highways not identified as high volume. When conditions warrant, coverage should be provided up to 18 hours per day during the storm.

High Volume Highway Classification

Typically include higways with four or more lanes for through traffic and selected two-lane highways. When determining the need for providing high volume coverage on two-lane highways, the following should be considered:

- Functional classification
- High traffic volumes
- Special service factors
- Planned conversion from two-lane to multi-lane facility

When conditions warrant, 24-hour coverage should be provided during a winter storm.

Passable Roadway

A roadway surface that is free from drifts, snow ridges, and as much ice and snow pack as is practical and can be traveled safely at reasonable speeds. A passable roadway should not be confused with "dry pavement" or "bare pavement", which is essentially free of all ice, snow, and any free moisture from shoulder to shoulder. This "dry/bare pavement" condition may

not exist until the weather conditions improve to the point where this pavement condition can be provided.

Reasonable Speed

Is considered a speed that a vehicle can travel without losing traction. During and immediately after a winter storm event, a reasonable speed will most likely be lower than the posted speed limit. Motorists can expect some inconvenience and will be expected to modify their driving practices to suit road conditions.