

Monday, December 13th, 2010

Illinois Tollway activates zero weather road patrols

Zero Weather Road Patrols Augment H.E.L.P. Trucks and State Police District 15

Downers Grove, Ill. -- The Illinois Tollway is preparing to launch its Zero Weather Road Patrols to assist drivers stranded in their cars during the first deep freeze of the 2010-2011 winter season. The Zero Weather Road Patrols are implemented when temperatures and/or wind chills drop below zero. Beginning on Sunday, Dec. 12 the Tollway activated Zero Patrols.

The 24-hour service dedicates hourly patrols in search of motorists stranded in disabled vehicles or in response to calls that come in to *999 motorist assistance, Illinois Tollway dispatch or Illinois State Police District 15.

“Being stranded without gas or with a flat tire in sub-zero weather can be a frightening experience,” said Executive Director Kristi Lafleur. “The Zero Weather Road Patrols provide additional service to Tollway customers who can be assured that we will be there to help when needed.”

While Tollway Highway Emergency Lane Patrol (H.E.L.P.) trucks run from 5 a.m. to 8 p.m., Monday through Friday, the Zero Weather Road Patrols work throughout the day and night, including weekends. Cars or trucks with empty fuel tanks, flat tires, overheated radiators or mechanical problems are just some of the most frequent problems reported among the motorists needing help.

There are a minimum of 11 Zero Weather Road Patrols, at least one from each maintenance garage section. While on patrol, these vehicles also retrieve debris reported in lanes and can assist Illinois State Police District 15 as needed. Zero Weather Road Patrols augment H.E.L.P. trucks and State Police patrols and ensure all segments of the Tollway system are monitored, especially during the overnight hours.

The Zero Weather Road Patrols consist of crew cab trucks equipped with arrow boards for directing traffic around accidents or stranded vehicles and enough room to accommodate up to five passengers if motorists need to be transported to a Tollway maintenance garage, toll plaza or Tollway oasis while service is obtained.

Other Tollway Services

The Tollway’s Traffic and Incident Management System (TIMS) provides real-time travel times via the Illinois Tollway’s website at www.illinoistollway.com. TIMS coordinates travel times and roadway information through the use of more than 200 roadway cameras, I-PASS electronic toll collection data, systemwide weather sensors, computer-aided dispatch for Illinois Tollway maintenance and Illinois State Police District 15 and motorist phone calls. This information helps

the Tollway quickly identify and confirm problems on the roadway, providing immediate, real-time assessment of incidents and allowing maintenance and emergency vehicles to be dispatched sooner, which helps the Tollway keep the roadways clear of accidents, as well as snow and ice.

In addition, the Illinois Tollway operates a toll-free telephone line to keep customers up to date about weather conditions on its roadways. Customers can call 1-800-TOLL-FYI or 1-800-865-5394) to get recorded information that is updated every two hours or as conditions require during winter storms.

Winter Weather Travel Tips:

The Tollway offers the following travel tips to keep safe during extreme temperatures:

- Stranded motorists should turn on their emergency lights and remain in their vehicles until help arrives.
- Cell phone users should call *999 motorist assistance for roadway assistance or to report other motorists pulled over on the side of the road.
- Before calling, try to note the nearest milepost marker – a green and white sign that displays a number, direction of travel and route designation shield – so the stranded motorist can be quickly located.