State of Georgia
Snow and Ice Plan

Annex to:

Georgia Emergency Operations Plan

2013
The State of Georgia Snow and Ice Plan contains information needed by local and state planners and response personnel.

This document is as an appendix to the Georgia Emergency Operations Plan and is consistent with the National Incident Management System.

For the planning cycle of the latest edition of the Georgia Emergency Operations Plan (2012 – 2016), GEMA-HS exercise coordinators anticipate conducting tabletop exercises as well as smaller scale, process specific drills regarding disaster response activities in a snow and ice event.

For more information on the State of Georgia Snow and Ice Plan, please contact the GEMA-HS Programs, Preparedness, Response and Recovery Directorate- Planning Unit at 404-635-7200.

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Director

Georgia Emergency Management Agency-Homeland Security
INTRODUCTION

Purpose

The purpose of the Snow and Ice Annex is to coordinate activities among state agencies to prepare for, respond to, and recover from a significant snow and ice event that impacts Georgia.

Scope & Applicability

The Snow and Ice Annex develops a framework for the State of Georgia to prepare for, respond to, and recover from a significant snow or ice weather event. This plan provides an overview of protective actions taken by state level organizations. The plan presents operational strategies for preparedness (pre-season and during an imminent threat), coordination efforts during response, state-level support and resource allocation, logistical support, and recovery operations.

A significant snow and ice weather event typically affects multiple counties and can even span multiple states. Due to this scale of impact, this plan may be activated when:

(a) snow and ice accumulation are anticipated to impact multiple counties such that emergency response cannot be effectively performed within each county, or cannot be successfully met by county mutual aid resources, requiring assistance from the State; OR
(b) one or more of the following products are issued by the National Weather Service for any area in Georgia:

Winter Storm Watch: Issued when there is at least a 50 percent chance for winter storm conditions occurring in the next 12 to 48 hours. Winter storm conditions include an accumulation of at least a half inch of sleet, and/or a significant accumulation (1/4 inch or more) of ice due to freezing rain, and/or heavy snow accumulation. Snow accumulations must be at least 2 inches (except 3 inches in the Northeast Georgia Mountains) within a 12-hour period, or at least 4 inches in a 24-hour period.

Winter Storm Warning: Issued when there is at least an 80 percent chance for winter storm conditions occurring within the next 24 hours. Winter storm conditions include an accumulation of at least a half inch of sleet, and/or a significant accumulation (1/4 inch or more) of ice due to freezing rain, and/or heavy snow accumulation. Snow accumulations must be at least 2 inches (except 3 inches in the Northeast Georgia Mountains) within a 12-hour period, or at least 4 inches in a 24-hour period.

Ice Storm Warning: Issued when there is at least an 80 percent chance that freezing rain will result in the accumulation of at least 1/4 inch of ice within the next 24 hours.

Blizzard Watch: Issued when there is at least a 50 percent chance for blizzard conditions within the next 12 to 48 hours. Blizzard conditions consist of sustained wind
speeds (or gusts) of at least 35 mph, and considerable falling or blowing snow causing a reduction of visibilities to less than 1/4 mile for at least 3 hours.

Blizzard Warning: Issued when there is at least an 80 percent chance that wind and snow will combine to produce blizzard conditions within the next 24 hours. Blizzard conditions consist of sustained wind speeds (or gusts) of at least 35 mph, and considerable falling or blowing snow causing a reduction of visibilities to less than 1/4 mile for at least 3 hours.

Situation Overview

Historically, snow and ice events have impacted north Georgia’s higher elevations more frequently. Due to north Georgia’s enhanced risk for winter weather, the northernmost counties are typically better equipped to address snow or ice events on a local level. Significant snow and ice accumulation, however, has threatened central and south Georgia as well. Because these regions experience winter weather less frequently, any winter storm is considered a high-impact event.

In early January 2011, a major winter storm hit north and central Georgia. On Sunday, January 9th, mid-level rain and snow fell into cold surface air, evaporating and causing surface temperatures to cool further. By late evening on the 9th, a mix of rain, sleet, and snow began to fall across north and central Georgia, with accumulation of up to two inches. Between 10 pm and midnight on Sunday, an intense band of snowfall fell along and north of the I-20 corridor. In north Georgia, snowfall accumulation was 8 to 10 inches; in central Georgia, snowfall ranged from 6 to 8.5 inches. Though the snow stopped falling by mid-day Monday, temperatures hovered around the freezing mark, and persistent freezing drizzle and rain caused significant ice accumulation across north and central Georgia. Despite de-icing efforts by local and State Departments of Transportation, roads that had begun to melt subsequently re-froze overnight. Temperatures remained below freezing for several hours, making driving conditions very dangerous. Numerous vehicles were stranded on interstates and arterials. Most public and private schools, colleges, and universities remained closed for much of the week. Because most roads were impassable, many people were confined to their homes, unable to travel to their places of employment.

As the potential for snow and ice pose a hazard to Georgia each winter, this plan is intended to help Georgia organize state-level response procedures to mitigate the impact of such an event. While large-scale loss of life or property do not typically occur during winter storms, conditions can quickly become dangerous. Stranded motorists or those caught outside during the storm face great threats in reaching help. The potential loss of power, gas and other utilities on a large scale has far-reaching effects, including the loss of heating sources, freezing and bursting of pipes, and potential spoilage of food and other critical sustenance. Widespread power outages may have spillover effects for communications, creating great difficulty in coordinating emergency response. Icy roads
contribute to dangerous driving conditions for the general public as well as emergency responders. This lack of mobility causes a range of issues, including the inability of hospitals or other critical service facilities to obtain food or medical supplies; the inability to obtain additional fuel supplies to operate generators; and difficulty in reaching vulnerable populations or transporting vulnerable populations to shelters.

Georgia typically will have three to five days advance notice of a potential snow and ice event, allowing state agencies and partners to begin planning for response. The agencies and partners most critical to response efforts during a snow and ice event include (but are not limited to):

ESF 1 (Transportation): Georgia Department of Transportation
ESF 2 (Communications): GEMA, AT&T, SouthernLINC, Verizon
ESF 3 (Public Works and Engineering): Georgia Department of Natural Resources
ESF 4 (Firefighting): Georgia Forestry Commission
ESF 5 (Emergency Management): GEMA
ESF 6 (Mass Care, Emergency Assistance, Housing & Human Services): Georgia Department of Human Services, American Red Cross
ESF 7 (Logistics Management & Resource Support): GEMA, Georgia Forestry Commission, Georgia Department of Administrative Services
ESF 8 (Public Health & Medical Services): Georgia Department of Public Health, American Red Cross
ESF 9 (Search, Rescue & Recovery): GEMA, Georgia National Guard, Georgia Department of Natural Resources
ESF 11 (Agriculture & Natural Resources): Georgia Department of Agriculture
ESF 12 (Energy): Georgia Environmental Finance Authority, Georgia Power, Georgia Electric Membership Cooperative (Georgia EMC), Atlanta Gas Light Resources (AGL Resources)
ESF 13 (Public Safety & Security): Georgia Department of Public Safety, Georgia Department of Natural Resources
ESF 15 (External Affairs): GEMA, Office of the Governor, Local Media Outlets, Georgia Department of Transportation
Planning Assumptions

A. This plan supports state agencies’ and local jurisdictions’ plans to address snow and ice hazards, including the Georgia Department of Transportation's plan for snow and ice removal from state roadways.

B. Winter storms may fluctuate in coverage and intensity. These storms may become severe with little warning.

C. A winter storm typically will affect multiple counties and possibly span numerous regions throughout the state. The severity of impacts may vary locally due to excessive snow or ice accumulation in certain areas; the presence of vulnerable populations; the location of critical facilities impacted by the snow and ice; or the isolation of certain communities, which may stymie emergency response efforts. In preparing to respond these events, agency and ESF representatives should plan for a variety of impacts, including (but not limited to):

- Widespread power outages (and the subsequent need for power generators at hospitals, nursing homes, and other critical facilities);
- Communication networks that may fail due to power outages or ice on equipment;
- Water treatment facilities and transport networks that may be shut down;
- Groceries and other goods that may be at risk of depletion if interstate highways are too hazardous for freight traffic (an especially critical consideration for hospitals, which typically stock just a few days of food and medical supplies);
- The possibility of opening warming shelters, depending on the severity of the storm and duration of impacts.

D. Most citizens will be made aware of the threat of a winter storm through a variety of means, including GEMA Public Information messaging; the National Weather Service, The Weather Channel, and other outlets for weather news; local TV news broadcasts; local newspapers; and Emergency Alert System broadcasts.

CONCEPT OF OPERATIONS

Due to the magnitude of significant snow and ice events, GEMA will be prepared to coordinate state resources in advance of a major winter storm. As all disasters are local, each county shall attempt to address emergency needs within its jurisdiction, potentially seeking mutual aid from neighboring counties. However, due to a number of critical factors, including the potential limited supply of snow and ice removal equipment within the State and counties; the winter storm’s impact on regional roads and interstate highways; and the overwhelming requests for assistance anticipated across a wide area, GEMA will be prepared to coordinate response and allocate critical resources on a statewide level. As with any emergency, the Governor may declare a State of Emergency to coordinate the state response, if necessary.
Preparedness Activities

In order to ensure the most effective response to a winter storm, state agencies will participate in key preparedness initiatives prior to the cold weather season.

A. Georgia Department of Administrative Services
   a. Update the inventory of the four-wheel drive vehicles among all State agencies.
   b. Draft a list of state vendors that are prepared to provide commodities needed during a snow and ice event (e.g., water, ice, road salt, sand, generators, and other supplies and equipment).
   c. Coordinate with state fuel vendors and ESF 12 partners to develop a strategy to support impacted areas should a shortage of gasoline or diesel fuel develop.

B. Georgia Department of Natural Resources
   a. Update the status and location of the department’s four-wheel drive vehicles and operators.
   b. Ensure that the vehicles have been properly maintained.
   c. Develop public information messages regarding measures to help prevent water pipes from freezing.

C. Georgia Department of Public Health
   a. Promote the county-level medical special needs registries for special medical needs residents and their caregivers to register their contact information.
   b. Confirm policies with area hospitals regarding the transport of critical hospital personnel (e.g., doctors, nurses, etc.) during snow and ice events.
   c. Encourage hospitals to continue developing emergency plans, especially regarding regional transportation.
   d. Encourage hospitals and other health facilities to monitor snow and ice forecasts and order anticipated supplies in advance of a threat.

D. Georgia Department of Transportation
   a. In the pre-season, verify that adequate snow and ice removal supplies are on hand.
   b. Establish or renew contracts with private contractors that specialize in snow and ice removal.
   c. Develop plan for assigning crew and/or contractors to specific corridors for snow and ice removal.
d. Review road treatment/clearing prioritization plans, especially with regard to public safety, public health, and public works facilities, and state and federal government critical facilities, that are adjacent to state roads or interstate/intrastate commerce routes.

E. Georgia Emergency Management Agency

   a. Conduct pre-season briefings among ESF partners.
   b. In coordination with ESF 2 partners, update the status of communications infrastructure and networks, and assess the readiness of available state communication cache assets for potential issuance/field use.
   c. Maintain the State Operations Center.

F. Georgia Forestry Commission

   a. Update the status and location of four-wheel drive vehicles and operators.
   b. Ensure that the vehicles have been properly maintained.
   c. Identify personnel for the potential operation of Logistics Staging Area (LSA) or Staging Areas (SAs) for food and water distribution.
Response Activities

During a major snow or ice event, the following agencies will have key responsibilities critical to emergency response. Note that during the response, changing conditions may warrant that these organizations participate in additional duties beyond the scope of those listed here.

A. Georgia Department of Administrative Services
   a. Prior to the onset of the winter storm, contact state agencies that possess four-wheel drive vehicles (as indicated by the inventory); advise the agencies to ensure that the vehicles are being properly maintained, and to prepare to re-locate the vehicles to sites strategic to response (as directed by the State Operations Center, in coordination with the Georgia Department of Transportation).
   b. Provide the status and location of all state-owned four-wheel drive vehicles upon activation.
   c. Serve as the liaison to state vendors as necessary.
   d. Staff the State Operations Center under ESF 7 to coordinate response efforts among partner agencies and state vendors.

B. Georgia Department of Human Services
   a. Be prepared to support local shelter RFAs.
   b. Be prepared to support local feeding center RFAs.
   c. Be prepared to support local warming center RFAs.
   d. Staff the State Operations Center under ESF 6 to coordinate response efforts among partner agencies.

C. Georgia Department of Natural Resources
   a. Prior to the onset of the storm, re-locate vehicles as needed so that they are easily accessible and strategically located for response (as directed by the State Operations Center, in coordination with the Georgia Department of Transportation).
   b. Staff the State Operations Center under ESF 3 and ESF 13 to coordinate response efforts among partner agencies.

D. Georgia Department of Public Health
   a. Coordinate with medical facilities and EMS units on planned operations during the snow and ice event.
   b. Coordinate with Georgia Department of Human Services on potential special medical needs during sheltering operations.
   c. Verify that status of medications on-hand within the State.
d. Utilize the county-level medical special needs registries to contact special needs residents and their caregivers.
e. Coordinate with area hospitals on requests for assistance related to the winter storm.
f. Staff the State Operations Center under ESF 8 to coordinate response efforts among partner agencies.

E. Georgia Department of Public Safety
   a. Escort emergency responders as needed on state roadways.
   b. Assist local law enforcement with security, road blockage, detours, or other response operations as needed.
   c. Coordinate with Georgia Department of Transportation to assist with security of snow and ice removal crews and equipment; road blockage or detour operations; and other strategic operations related to the removal of snow and ice from state roadways.
   d. Provide security and support for other response operations as needed among state partners and in local jurisdictions (sheltering, critical transportation, etc.).
   e. Provide spot reports on road conditions.
   f. Staff the State Operations Center under ESF 13 to coordinate response efforts among partner agencies.

F. Georgia Department of Transportation
   a. Ensure adequate staffing within GDOT for snow and ice removal in anticipation of operational periods.
   b. Activate contracts with private parties for snow and ice removal operations.
   c. Enact all snow and ice removal policies, including shift change and assignment procedures.
   d. Disseminate road conditions through ESF 15, Georgia Navigator 511, and other outlets.
   e. Staff the State Operations Center under ESF 1 to coordinate response efforts among partner agencies.

G. Georgia Emergency Management Agency
   a. Provide briefings and updates to the Governor.
   b. If appropriate, recommend that the Governor declare a State of Emergency for the snow and ice event.
   c. If appropriate, recommend that the Governor request a Presidential Disaster Declaration for the snow and ice event.
   d. Convene the Georgia Emergency Operations Command if necessary.
e. Utilize state-level resources for emergency management. If the emergency 
exceeds the capabilities of the State, GEMA may request assistance through 
EMAC or recommend that the Governor seek a Presidential Disaster 
Declaration.

f. Process requests for assistance from counties.

g. Maintain appropriate staffing levels and oversee all essential command and 
control processes.

h. Facilitate coordination calls among response partners.

i. Coordinate the dissemination of public information regarding the snow and 
ice event.

j. Prior to the onset of the winter storm, coordinate with ESF 2, ESF 7, and 
ESF 3 partners to position power generators at commercial and state-owned 
communications sites (previously identified by State agencies as critical to 
response operations) in anticipation of potential long-term power outages.

H. Georgia Environmental Finance Authority
   a. Communicate with Georgia Power Company and Georgia EMC regarding the 
extent and anticipated duration of any power outages.
   b. Communicate with ESF 12 partners regarding the potential for disruption to 
fuel deliveries.
   c. Staff the State Operations Center under ESF 12 to coordinate response 
efforts among partner agencies.

I. Georgia Forestry Commission
   a. Prior to the onset of the winter storm, re-locate vehicles as needed so that 
that they are easily accessible and strategically located for response (as 
directed by the State Operations Center, in coordination with the Georgia 
Department of Transportation).
   b. Staff the State Operations Center under ESF 4 and ESF 7 to coordinate 
response efforts among partner agencies.
   c. Staff the State Logistics Desk as needed.
   d. Staff the LSA or SA for food and water distribution as needed.

J. Georgia National Guard
   a. Escort emergency responders as needed on state roadways (in coordination 
with the Georgia State Patrol) or local roadways.
   b. Coordinate with the Georgia Department of Transportation to assist with the 
security of snow and ice removal crews and equipment; road blockage or 
detour operations; and other strategic operations related to the removal of 
snow and ice from state roadways.
c. Provide security and support for other response operations as needed among state partners and in local jurisdictions (sheltering, critical transportation, etc.).

d. Assist in the delivery of life-saving and life-sustaining commodities (i.e., food and water).

e. Alert the State Defense Force for potential mission requests.

f. Staff the State Operations Center to coordinate response efforts among partner agencies. Be prepared to supply information on current generator inventory, and the availability of generator support capability.

The agencies listed above do not represent an inclusive list of state-level responders; it is anticipated that almost all ESFs will be activated, encompassing a variety of additional agencies and private sector partners. The agencies with highlighted responsibilities, rather, are considered key to the restoration of critical infrastructure and networks, or play a key role in addressing life safety needs.