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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**DATE: November 5, 2020**

**RE: DPW WINTER ADVISORY**

**Contact: Vincent Azzarelli, Chemung County Public Information Director @ 737-2837; Matt Mustico, President, Chemung County Town Highway Superintendents' Association Chemung County Public Works (739-3896); Town of Elmira Highway Superintendent (734-0199); Village of Horseheads; Andrew Avery, P.E., Commissioner of Public Works; Chemung County & City of Elmira (739-3896)**

***“Highway and Public Works Superintendents Issue Winter Driving Advisory”***

HORSEHEADS – With winter weather already making its presence known, Matt Mustico, President of the Chemung County Town Highway Superintendents' Association, and Andy Avery, Commissioner of Public Works, have issued a winter driving advisory for all Chemung County residents. Planning and preventative maintenance are important year-round, but even more so when it comes to winter driving. Residents are asked to be mindful of potentially hazardous road conditions when the forecast calls for snow or icy conditions.

*“Operating a vehicle of any size is a complex task requiring the driver’s complete attention. Snow and ice conditions create additional layers of difficulty,”* said Avery. *“Winter weather provides changing and often unexpected, random, or challenging conditions for all drivers, regardless of their experience.”*

Your highway superintendents urge residents to:

- Allow yourself extra travel time to reach your destination. Winter travel generally takes longer.
- Avoid driving when tired. The proper amount of rest is key before taking on winter weather tasks; rest reduces driving risks.
- Avoid the use of a cell phone or smart device while driving, even in hands-free mode. While hands-free mode use is legal, studies have shown hands-free operation of cell phones can still be distracting, and result in dangerous crashes.

- • Provide extra distance between vehicles to allow for additional stopping time.
- • Note that four-wheel or all-wheel drive vehicles, while providing increased traction, don't decrease braking distance.
- • Always match your speed to the road and weather conditions. Roads with lower traffic volumes will have less deicing materials applied than thoroughfares.
- • Make certain your vehicle's tires are properly inflated, undamaged, and have an appropriate amount of tread-life remaining.
- • Turn off the cruise control when driving on any slippery surface (wet, ice, sand).
- • Always ensure seat belts are used by all vehicle occupants, not just children and front seat occupants. Note New York State now requires seat-belt usage by all occupants, regardless of their age or location in the vehicle. Take an additional step and ensure all pets are secured while riding in the car. Quick stops can launch an unsecured pet, injuring you and your pet.
- • As required by State law (Vehicle & Traffic, Article 28, §1162), fully clean off your vehicle before beginning any trip. Clear vision is a key to good driving. A clean car prevents snow from flying onto adjacent or trailing vehicles. Snow left on your roof can slide onto your windshield when stopping.
  - Be aware of snow plows on the road:
    - Give them adequate room and plenty of vision to operate. - Stay a sufficient distance behind so the operator can see you. Passing a snow plow can be hazardous to you, other motorists, or the plow operator.
- • Plow operators need your cooperation and consideration; remember that plow operators have to go home and shovel out driveways as well!
- • Understand that bridge surfaces are often more slippery than the roadway and drive accordingly. Cold air beneath the bridge causes the bridge surface to freeze faster.
- • Follow local parking restrictions to allow efficient clearing of snow from roadways.
- • Mailboxes are generally the responsibility of property owners. All mailboxes should be properly installed. State law provides that repairs to mailboxes in the R-O-W damaged by plows or flying snow are the responsibility of the property owner, not the municipality. (Highway, Article 11, §319 and Attorney General Opinion)
- • Plowing or shoveling snow from driveways and sidewalks into or across roadways is not allowed by New York State law (Vehicle & Traffic, Article 33, §1219) It creates a hazard for motorists and highway employees alike.

- If possible, wait until after plows go by before shoveling your driveway entrance. Shovel the snow to the “downstream” side of your driveway. This prevents snow from being plowed back into the driveway.

***“Most importantly, drive safely and courteously. Our highway and public works’ employees strive to clear snow and ice as efficiently and safely as feasible,”*** added Mustico.

In the event of a winter storm, do not drive unless necessary. Delay trips when particularly poor weather is expected. If you must travel:

- Stock your car with survival gear; this should include blankets, a shovel, flashlight and extra batteries, extra warm clothing, a set of tire chains, battery booster cables or a charged jump starter pack, quick energy foods, and brightly-colored cloth to use as a distress flag.
- Keep your gas tank at least half-full to prevent gasoline freeze-up. If you have a cell phone or two-way radio available for your use, keep the battery charged and with you when traveling.
- Share your travel plans with friends or family.

Above all else, stay safe during these difficult times. Please note your highway departments have plans in place to complete snow and ice control operations regardless of whether a particular highway shop has been affected by the COVID-19 virus.

For more information on safe winter driving, please visit the United States Department of Transportation’s “Winter Driving Tips” webpage at: <https://www.trafficsafetymarketing.gov/get-materials/vehicle-safety/winter-driving-tips>

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