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Continued KDOT staffing shortages could impact highway snow, ice removal efforts

The Kansas Department of Transportation is committed to keeping the highways cleared when inclement weather impacts the state, but staffing shortages continue to affect the agency with not enough snowplow operators in many areas. These ongoing shortages could affect KDOT's ability to clear snow and ice from highways in a timely manner.

"We want motorists to know ahead of time - it's not a matter of if the highways will be cleared this winter, but when," said Transportation Secretary Julie Lorenz. "KDOT crews will be proactive by shifting crews and pretreating surfaces whenever possible but having fewer employees could cause delays in removing snow and ice from all the affected roadways."

The agency is about 24% short of snowplow operators needed to be fully staffed in offices across the state. However, all KDOT field offices have made preparations in September and October to be ready for winter - employees participated in regional meetings with several days of hands-on snowfighter training exercises. Salt, sand and other materials are fully stocked, and pre-maintenance work on snowplows and other equipment is complete.

"Our maintenance crews always do their best to serve the public as they work 12-hour shifts in their efforts to clear the highways," said Secretary Lorenz. "But motorists can help by checking on road conditions and weather forecasts in advance and possibly delaying travel plans. It's important to plan ahead, stay informed and travel safe."

Before traveling, check www.KanDrive.org, KDOT's road condition website - it is updated 24/7 for highway conditions, short-term closures and general traffic alerts, and provides camera views to see current road conditions in that area. KanDrive now has a new App available for download on iOS and Android phones with a hands-free/eye-free feature to announce upcoming traffic events while traveling. The Kansas 511 phone system also has been updated and provides reports on a specific route, in a city or between two cities.

The agency also will deploy all employees who have a Commercial Driver's License (CDL) to plow snow and hire seasonal employees. KDOT will assist selected applicants in

obtaining a CDL upon hiring, which includes providing training. For people interested in working at KDOT, go to the state's employment website at <http://jobs.ks.gov/>

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