

Office of the Governor

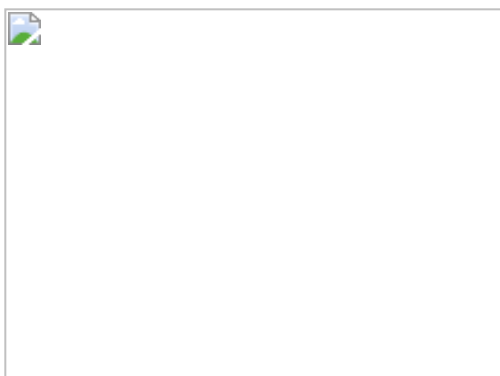
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NEWS RELEASE

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Governor Whitman Reiterates that New Jersey is Ready for Y2K



Governor Christie Whitman answers a question during a Y2K preparedness press conference at the State Police Emergency Operations Center. Pictured with the Governor are Wendy Rayner, Chief Information Officer, Colonel William Lowe, New Jersey National Guard, and John Farmer, Attorney General.

Gov. Christie Whitman today reiterated that the state is ready for the new millennium while at the state's Emergency Operations Center located in the New Jersey State Police Headquarters in West Trenton. The Governor wanted to reassure residents that all state computer systems have been tested and upgraded, and the state's Office of Emergency Management is equipped to handle any potential New Year-related situations should they arise.

"New Jersey is ready to move into the year 2000 precisely because we have spent the last two years addressing potential Y2K problems in the state's computer systems. Our systems have been upgraded, tested and re-tested to prepare for Y2K - and I am confident that the transition to the new millennium will be uneventful," said Gov. Whitman. "But should something unforeseen happen, we have contingency plans in place to ensure that state government will be able to continue to serve our residents."

Gov. Whitman was joined by Colonel Carson A. Dunbar, Jr., Superintendent of the New Jersey State Police, and other emergency management officials during a tour of the facilities. As a precautionary measure, explained Gov. Whitman, the state's Office of Emergency Management has been activated through the New Year's weekend.

"The bottom line is that no one can assure us 100% that we won't be affected by Y2K issues this evening. We believe we're prepared and that preparation includes being ready to handle the unexpected," said Gov. Whitman. "What I do expect is for people to enjoy their millennium celebrations and to take normal precautions as they would on any other long holiday weekend," she added upon wishing everyone a happy and healthy New Year.

Col. Carson Dunbar said that in addition to regular emergency management staff, the Emergency Operations Center (EOC) includes representatives from the major energy, water and telecommunications providers; National Guard; Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) and other federal agencies. State departments such as

transportation, environmental protection, corrections, health, and human services also have staff at the EOC.

Col. Dunbar said that the EOC has been fully activated since 8:00 a.m. today and will remain at this same level of alert through 8:00 a.m. on Sat., Jan. 1. The EOC will continue to operate with reduced staffing through 8:00 a.m., Tues., Jan. 4. All 21 county Offices of Emergency Management were also activated beginning at 8:00 a.m. today and will remain activated through 8:00 a.m. on Sat., Jan.1.

Additionally, Col. Dunbar reconfirmed that he has tripled the number of uniformed state troopers assigned to patrol the Turnpike, Garden State Parkway, Atlantic City Expressway, Interstate highway system and other state roadways throughout the New Year's Eve holiday. This effort will supplement and dramatically increase visible State Police presence on the highways with the focus to keep traffic flowing smoothly in the highly congested North Jersey/New York and South Jersey/Philadelphia traffic corridors. Additionally, all other State Police personnel were placed on 24-hour recall status beginning today through Sat., Jan.1.

"With the official New Year's Eve weekend getting underway this evening coupled with the once-in-a-lifetime millennium event, the State Police has planned appropriately and prepared responsibly. While we don't expect there to be any unusual problems, we are ready to handle them if we have them," said Col. Dunbar.

The National Guard has personnel on stand-by at 35 armories throughout the state. State Department of Transportation central and regional centers are also open and staffed throughout this activation period. All DOT fueling and salting depots will have alternate power sources available. Key personnel are deployed on the roadways.

Col. Dunbar said that the two most likely problems the state will encounter, overloaded 911 phone lines and telephone lines, are ones that New Jerseyans can help to avoid.

"Again, I urge all residents to use 911 only for life and death emergency calls. Please call your local police department directly for all other situations," said Col. Dunbar. "We have also joined the telephone companies in urging people not to overload phone lines by placing calls right at 12:01 a.m. While we all want to celebrate the new millennium with our friends and family, it would be helpful if everyone could delay making these calls for a few hours."

