

Governor Phil Murphy

# TRANSCRIPT: December 16th, 2020 Coronavirus Briefing Media

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Governor Murphy Holds Press Conference on Winter Storm...



**Governor Phil Murphy:** Good morning, everybody. Welcome to the New Jersey Statewide Traffic Management Center, which is the nerve center for our storm response. Our theme today probably ought to be, "If it's not one thing, it's another." I'm joined by the outstanding Commissioner of the Department of Transportation Diane Gutierrez-Scaccetti, State Police Superintendent Colonel Pat Callahan, Homeland Security Director Jared Maples, and Jim Giuliano, Director of the Division of Reliability and Security at the New Jersey Board of Public Utilities. Joe Fiordaliso, its President, is not here as he is chairing a board meeting. I want to make sure Joe hears this, it's a board that President Taft appointed him to.

Let me just switch gears for one second before we jump into the storm discussions. Because of the need today to focus on the weather, we will not be holding our usual COVID-19 briefing. However, as the pandemic does not take a snow day. I'd like to report today's numbers as reported to the Department of Health.

Today we're reporting another 5,803 additional positive tests. That brings our statewide total cumulatively to 415,075 since March 4th. Spot positivity is 13.08%, that's as of December 12th. The rate of transmission is down a little bit to 1.08 as of December 14th.

As of last night, our hospitals were treating a total of 3,672 patients. That's up slightly. And of that number 3,462 were confirmed COVID positive, 210 were awaiting confirmation of their test results.

Throughout the day yesterday, this has been a trend of late, hundreds going in, and hundreds, happily alive, leaving. Unfortunately, it's skewed toward more people going in. Yesterday 489 new COVID positive patients were admitted, while 451 live patients were discharged. There were a total of 721 patients in our intensive

care units, and 482 of them were on ventilators.

Sadly, with the heaviest heart, we report another 91 confirmed COVID-19 losses of life from our New Jersey family. That total confirmed now stands at 16,095 blessed souls lost. There is now an additional -- and this number is up by 41 -- an additional 1,908 probable deaths.

Now, having said that, yesterday was a historic day. A day for optimism with some of our healthcare heroes receiving the first of what we anticipate will be millions of statewide vaccinations against COVID-19. Really emotional, really incredible. However, folks, we cannot for a moment let our guard down. If anything, in fact, the reality of a vaccine in our midst and another, by the way expected to join it, possibly within a matter of days, that should harden our resolve; not lessen it but harden our resolve to continue with things like social distancing, wearing our masks, washing our hands and doing everything we can to protect our families and our communities.

We will be back in Trenton for our regular briefing on Friday. With that, let's get back to the reason why we're gathered today.

Starting late this morning -- and my colleagues will correct me if they see the timing differently -- we expect a significant winter storm to begin moving its way across the state. I have signed an Executive Order declaring a state of emergency beginning at 2:00 p.m. today. I'm also announcing that all state offices will be closed at 1:00 p.m. today, and that's for everybody except employees who are otherwise directed to fight the storm, so-called weather essential employees. Otherwise state offices will all close today at 1:00 p.m.

This will be a statewide weather event and every county is currently under either a watch or a warning of some sort. A winter storm warning for the entirety of New Jersey north of I-95, a winter storm advisory for the entire Southwest quadrant, and either coastal flood warnings, storm warnings, or high wind warnings for those nearer the shore.

The storm is bringing with it the potential for at least a foot of snow to perhaps 18 inches across the I-78 corridor and north, with localized accumulations of even more in the higher elevations in the northwest corners of the state. Across Central New Jersey, we anticipate snow to mix with sleet, and while this may hold down accumulations, it will make that snow heavier. South Jersey may be spared the snow accumulations and see more of a wintry mix or just rain, but precipitation is only one concern that we have with this system.

We also anticipate strong winds throughout the evening and overnight with 30-to-40 mile-an-hour winds possible inland, and 50-miles-per-hour gales possible along the shore. These winds may lead to blowing snow in the northern part of the state and driving rain and sleet elsewhere, hampering visibility and making travel that much more dangerous, and they may lead to power outages and Jim will get to that in his remarks.

As Diane will detail, the Department of Transportation has been busy preparing for the storm, pretreating many roads and highways, and repositioning towing and other equipment in the usual hilly trouble spots along I-280 in Essex County and I-78 throughout the western part of the state. Some roads in North Jersey had also been treated for Monday's storm, so we hope that that will keep things a little clearer as well.

A commercial vehicle restriction which includes tractor trailers, empty straight CDL weighted trucks, any passenger vehicles towing trailers, motorcycles, and recreational vehicles, including boats is in place. That restriction is in place along our interstate highways. This restriction does not apply to the turnpike, the Parkway, Diane, up to Exit 105 or the Atlantic City Expressway. The Department of Transportation has also been coordinating with NJ Transit, the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey, the toll road authorities and our regional partners to ensure everyone's on the same page. As you heard from us in prior storms, we don't want unintended consequences of different levels of restrictions and parameters from one state to the next.

Now, because so many people are currently still working from home and so many students are on remote learning, we do not anticipate the same after-school and rush-hour issues that we would otherwise see from a storm with this timing, coming in as it is mostly going to do throughout the afternoon and into the evening

rush. We hope this will allow DOT's crews to tend to their duties without any issues. But if you are on the road after the storm conditions have begun, we urge you to please take it slow and use common sense and caution.

We ask specifically that you stay clear of any ploughing or spreading operations, do not try to pass them and if they are behind you, please let them pass so they can treat the roadway ahead of you. And let's give everyone working on a road crew, our State Police, other first responders at the point of attack our sincere thanks for staying out there.

If you must travel, be sure you have an emergency supply kit for your vehicle and that it is up-to-date. Information on road conditions will be posted on the electronic signs along our highways and through the NJ DOT Facebook page, on twitter @njdot\_info, and at 511NJ.org. I'll ask Diane to provide a complete briefing on the personnel and equipment the DOT has at the ready, but it is significant.

As I noted, because of the winds and heavy snow expected to be a part of the system, the potential for power outages exists and the Board of Public Utilities remains in contact with the electric supply companies regarding their readiness, and I have been making some of those connections personally. If you experience a blackout, remember folks, please immediately report it to your electric company. Do not assume that your neighbor or somebody else has called it in. Should you see a downed power line or come upon one in your car, please, please steer clear. Stay away from it. Stay a safe distance away and call that in and leave it to the professionals. In my time and our time as Governor up here, folks, you'll recall have lost at least two people who do not heed that advice who have lost their lives.

Because of the potentially windy conditions, crews may not be able to safely attend to some poles and wires right away, so we do ask for your patience as we obviously want the women and men out working in these conditions to be able to make it back to their families. I know at least at JC P&L there's at least 200 folks in from their Ohio affiliates. My guess is we'll have out-of-staters coming in to all the big electric suppliers.

Finally, and this relates to that point, this is our first weather emergency of this pandemic and we don't want anyone's last-minute preparations to inadvertently become an instance where they're exposed to coronavirus, or potentially and unknowingly spread it to others. We're going to want to chip in to help our neighbors and shovel out, especially our older residents, but please keep in mind the need for maintaining social distancing and wearing a face covering while doing so. If you're going to be heading out before the storm hits for that last gallon of milk or to stock up on snowy day snacks, please do not forget to wear your mask and to be kind to the grocery store workers who are there to help you.

And to store owners, we remind you that your store capacity cannot exceed 50% and that all shoppers – not most, but all shoppers – must be properly wearing a face mask and socially distancing at all times while in your stores.

Storm updates, as well as preparedness information, are all available online at [ready.nj.gov](https://ready.nj.gov), at the Office of Emergency Management's Facebook page, and on Twitter @readyNJ, again that's [ready.nj.gov](https://ready.nj.gov), @readyNJ, and by the way, if you're expected to be on an NJ Transit train or bus, check out [njtransit.com](https://njtransit.com) before you make your commuting plans. It's my guess, if we are right about this storm, at least in the central and northern part of the state their service will be ultimately, as we get through the afternoon and evening, impaired to some degree so check that out. Information from a variety of official channels is also being retweeted on the State of New Jersey Twitter account and that's @njgov.

With that, please help me welcome a great leader in storms and in peacetime and our host today, the Commissioner of the Department of Transportation, Diane Gutierrez-Scaccetti.

**Commissioner of Transportation Diane Gutierrez-Scaccetti:** Thank you, Governor. Good morning. The primary responsibility of New Jersey's transportation agencies in the winter is ensuring public safety by keeping the transportation system operational and clearing of ice and snow. Our crews and contractors are ready for the winter season and for this storm. We are monitoring the forecasts, coordinating with the New Jersey State Police and other transportation agencies in our planning and we will activate resources as needed. But we know today that we are activating all assets for this storm.

The Jersey Department of Transportation will have more than 3,000 NJ DOT and contract spreaders and plowers available. New Jersey Turnpike Authority and South Jersey Transportation Authority will have an additional 900,000 spreaders available to clear the Turnpike, Garden State Parkway and the Atlantic City Expressway. Between these three agencies, there will be more than 2,600 staff and volunteers working to ensure the public safety. In addition, we have called in additional towing assets to help clear disabled vehicles quickly.

I offer a very stern warning: please obey the posted speed limits. We have many occasions where we have vehicles that exceed that speed limit and then we are assisting them in the ditches along the state highways, and so we really want to be able to use those assets to help people who truly are in need. So please obey posted speed limits.

Working with the State Police and our towers, we are also implementing what we call our incline package. Special towing teams and state police assistance for I-78 at Jugtown Mountain near Exit 7 and I-280, which are two highways that are hilly and are particularly difficult for trucks to pass in snowy conditions. Many of you know or have seen already that we have put an administrative order out for commercial restrictions on the vast majority of highways north of I-195. I'm sure if you have it, that's great; if you don't, we will get you a copy of it.

The DOT also has 278,000 tons of salt, which is near 100% capacity, and we constantly resupply our salt throughout the winter season as we consume it. In preparation for this storm, we brined roads yesterday anywhere that there was not residual salt from Monday's event. But I need to reemphasize some of the Governor's points. If you don't need to be out, please stay home. I know you've been home for a long time, we just need you to be home for a couple of more days. We ask you to clear the roads so that we can clear the roads, and it is far easier for us to make sure that we get this done efficiently and get the roads reopened when we have a clear shot down a highway of moving that snow. Spreaders and ploughs need room to do their jobs, and it is best for people to stay off the roads during the storm.

For those of you who have concerns about COVID, we do have protocols for our staff and contractors to follow. It includes wearing masks and practicing social distancing. Drivers and spreaders and plough trucks are alone, and NJ DOT equipment is cleaned after every shift. We also built redundancy into our staffing plans to help ensure adequate coverage. What this means is in addition to our standard ploughing contracts that we have, we have called in our ploughing strike teams, which is a secondary set of contractors that we call out for emergent situations. None of us have been immune to the effects of COVID in our operations, and this will ensure that we can address our customers adequately during the next couple of days.

We do remind you all to check the forecast and check road conditions before you leave your home. Again, if it isn't necessary to go out, please don't. If you do, please allow extra time and drive very carefully. As the Governor said, make sure you have emergency preparedness in your car. If you need further information, you know, my mother told me repetition is one of the best teachers, [ready.nj.gov](https://ready.nj.gov). It's important. These are important things.

You know, we can talk about it all day long, but having a bottle of water, a phone charger, a snack, a blanket in your car during the winter is just good planning. Most importantly, when you see road crews treating and ploughing the roads this winter, stay back. Give them the space they need to do their job. Our motto at DOT and for all the transportation agencies is everyone needs to get home, every night. That's just a commitment we have to make. And it's not just to our employees, but it's to all of those who use our facilities.

For those of you using our transit system, again, essential travel only. Allow extra time for your trip. Take extra care when walking to and from train platforms or uncovered sidewalks getting to a bus stop. Given the accumulation predictions, especially for Central and North Jersey, as the Governor said, we may have to adjust service, we may even have to suspend service. If we do, we will endeavor to give four hours' notice of any suspension to allow our customers to return home or to get to their final destinations. If warranted, we will make special arrangements if a train system goes down, to cover it with additional bus service but we don't know the extent of the weather on the train system in terms of the catenary and any icing that may occur on the electric piece of our train system. So please, please, please monitor the website for schedule information, [njtransit.com](https://njtransit.com) and again, [ready.nj.gov](https://ready.nj.gov). You all have the DOT websites because I see you all the time out there.

The biggest thing I can say is, you know, be safe. We've had a tough year. This is one way, I guess, to ring out the old year and ring in the new year but the most important thing we can do as we approach the holiday is to get through this storm safely. Thanks.

**Governor Phil Murphy:** Thank you, Diane, for everything, including your leadership and for hosting us so graciously today. So he normally talk to us about compliance and weather. We're going to put compliance to the side today. Today is all about weather. Please help me welcome the Superintendent of the State Police, Colonel Pat Callahan.

**State Police Superintendent Col. Patrick Callahan:** Thank you, Governor. Good morning, everybody. We echo a few of the remarks that the Governor and Commissioner made. From a state OEM perspective, we did activate the State Emergency Operations Centre this morning at seven o'clock. That'll be activated for the duration of the storm and probably into tomorrow afternoon or evening. We have our primary state partners there, Board of Public Utilities, DOT, DEP, as well as Human Services who oversees that mass care emergency support function from warming centers to shelter for our vulnerable populations. Currently 12 County Emergency Operation Centers are activated and we do have troopers from our Emergency Response Bureau embedded in each one of those so the communication is robust and constant. They had a call right before this. We've been on the phone with National Weather Service with all 21 County OEM coordinators. That communication is, as I said, constant.

We also have our New Jersey Task Force One Urban Search and Rescue staff poised and ready to go with snowmobiles to assist with those readiness packages that the Commissioner discussed. We also have high water, high-wheeled vehicles ready because we are anticipating some moderate flooding down along the coast to coincide with high tide tomorrow morning.

I just add one other thing, the Commissioner put out the edict this morning with regards to towing. If a car is abandoned on the highway, any vehicle that's out there that's impeding snow removal operations will be immediately towed. That's why it's important that if you don't have to be out there, don't be out there. I know we say it all the time. We will have extra troopers out there to make sure that we have all the interstates covered. But again, to protect them, if you don't have to be out don't be out. And to the Governor's point, sometimes that urge to pass the snowplough operation in that unplowed left lane is great. I asked you and challenge you to seriously fight that urge to go out there into that unplowed lane, because most times, vehicles that try that end up in the median, into the guardrail or, you know, having a motor vehicle accident.

So, be safe. I have no doubt that we'll get through this but I just ask for everybody to do your part in making sure that we get through this first storm. It's going to be tough driving tonight. Whiteout conditions, high winds, blizzard-like so as I said, if you don't need to be out there, don't be out there. Thanks, Gov.

**Governor Phil Murphy:** Thanks, Pat. That last point I would hit, and you both said it and I'd underscore it. If you don't have a good reason to go out just don't go out. Don't tempt fate here. Thank you, Pat, for that, for all. Please help me bring up, we want to make sure that while we're looking over here, something doesn't happen over here. We also want to make sure that our critical infrastructure is protected at all times and vibrant and workable. With that, please help me welcome the Director of the Office of Homeland Security and Preparedness, Jared Maples.

**Director of Homeland Security and Preparedness Jared Maples:** Thank you, Governor and good morning. 2020 has given us yet another challenge which is probably the understatement of the day, at least, if not the year. I want to ensure that the public knows that we are constantly vigilant to any potential threats that are out there. As the governor said, we remained in constant contact throughout this entire year and certainly everyday with our federal partners, FBI, US Attorney's Office, of course, and the State Police and our counties, locals, everyone that takes part in securing our state and making sure that we have the most relevant and real-time threat information. To that end, I'll say there is no specific known or credible threat to New Jersey, but we are monitoring, as we do every single day.

From a critical infrastructure perspective, we've also been maintaining constant contact or near constant contact with our critical infrastructure partners, particular to cyber and physical security. And again, while there is no specific threat, there is the ever-present threat on both of those mediums that we are constantly in the loop on and making sure that we're aware of, and try to interdict before any type of an attack could occur.

I want to make sure I also highlight and thank our partners, certainly the Colonel, Commissioner Scaccetti, President Fiordaliso and so many more across our state for helping with resiliency, building resiliency for events like this snowstorm. It's on blue sky days, not when the clouds are coming in like they are today, that the real work is done and that's a great credit to this team in front of you, led under the governor's leadership, the work that's been done every single day. I thank you all for your leadership. I thank the entire state, everyone for being socially distanced, for staying home if you possibly can and letting the troopers and the transportation workers do their job and keeping us all safe. Thank you all, stay safe.

**Governor Phil Murphy:** Thank you, Jared. It's always good to hear that message. You know, when we used to go to Broadway plays you get a little slip on the program that said today the role of so-and-so. Well, today the role of President Joe Fiordaliso is being played by the very able BPU Director and the Head of the Division of Reliability and Security, please help me welcome another great leader, Jim Giuliano.

**NJ PBU Director of Reliability and Security Jim Giuliano:** Thank you, Governor. This is a major winter storm event, as the Governor said, and utilities are making preparations and have been for the past several days. This weather has a strong potential to impact trees and utility lines causing loss of electric service, especially in the northern counties of the state. NPU will support NJ OEM with priority restorations, clearing roadways, and monitoring the progress and effectiveness of the restoration that we expect to happen in the state.

All four utilities are in major storm mode. They are marshalling crews within New Jersey and from outside of the state as well. The telecommunications companies are also making provisions as they are considered essential, and they will work with the utility companies to avoid any confusion to get their service restored as quickly as possible, if needed.

All residents and businesses should make preparations by properly reporting an outage if it occurs, as the Governor said. Do not wait for someone else to report your outage. It's important that you report it as a business or residence. Charge your cell phones, computers, and other devices and have spare batteries for flashlights. Again, as the Governor mentioned, learn how to use your hotspot on your mobile phone if that is available and charge it up. Use a mobile device to track your outages. You can sign up for that with your power company. If you're not at home or mobile, you'll be able to check on the status of your restoration. And as hours go by, the utility maps will begin to populate with information so you can access your particular outage in your community and determine when the estimated time of restoration is offered.

Use extreme care when using generators in particular, and assume that a downed wire is live and avoid that area. With this sort of weather event, if there is icing and heavy snow, the trees are not laden with leaves, but that snow has a tendency to come down after the event passes so you need to use care outside as branches and lines will continue to come down even after the weather event passes the state.

We are prepared, the utilities are prepared and we will work closely with the state OEM, DOT and others to ensure that the restoration is as effective as possible, but we do expect outages from this weather event. Thank you, Governor.

**Governor Phil Murphy:** Thank you, Jim. I was on last evening with J P&L and PSE&G, who were the two largest in terms of where the storm is likely to hit. I'll be on with ACE a little bit later. I think if you add up all of what was said, the big message is stay safe, stay home, if you can possibly do that. Just don't go out unless you have to go out.

This is a statewide storm. The South it's much more likely rain and slush but there's very significant concern, particularly with high tide tomorrow morning, on coastal flooding. It's a high wind storm up and down the state whether it's raining or snowing, so that could be 30 to 40, maybe gusting as much as 50 miles an hour on the shore.

In the middle of the state, where we are right now, it's probably a mix of slush and snow. Lousy conditions, I'm throwing out their word here, and I think 6 to 12 in the middle of the state. And then up North, particularly if you go Northwest, this is a major, major snowstorm. And you combine 12 to 18 inches with high winds, likely power outages, you've got elevated parts of the state, disproportionately in that part of our state, therefore the traffic realities are much more complicated.

And if that all weren't enough, we are also watching very carefully the delivery of the vaccine. George, I think you said by the end of the week we're going from six hospitals up to adding another 47; 35 of them have deliveries expected within the next 24 to 48 hours. I think I got that right. That's a particular focus that we've all got and Diane it's fair to say and Pat that you get a free easy pass, if you will, if you are delivering vaccines and the protocol is to go to the Office of Emergency Management to notify and self-notify that that's what you've got on your truck. If we didn't have enough already on our hands, that's another dimension.

With that, we'll take a couple of quick questions. I'm going to keep this fairly short because we got a fair amount of people in a fairly small space. Brent.

#### Q&A Session

**Brent Johnson, Star-Ledger:** Did schools give snow days if they are already virtual? How many people were vaccinated yesterday in the state?

**Governor Phil Murphy:** I don't have a number how many got vaccinated yesterday, but we can get that to you. I think the school snow day is a district by district reality. I'll leave it at that. Please.

**Reporter:** Governor, regarding the deal on tax incentives, property tax incentives, it's an \$11.5 billion expense that will be approved in probably three days. Was that transparent and was the public given enough time to weigh in? Especially given it's an unpaid bill they haven't seen yet?

**Governor Phil Murphy:** Yeah, so I'd say a couple of things. Number one, we don't have microphones here so I should probably repeat the question, which is any comment on the agreement for incentives package and in particular, that it's going relatively quickly and folks haven't had a chance to see it. I'm not responsible for the Legislative processes so you should ask the Legislative side of the House in terms of that.

But I will say this, a couple of things, if I may. I don't normally comment on this, but I've gotten a number of incomings on this and I want to make sure that everyone knows where I am. This is overwhelmingly what we proposed, I think about a year ago, in the so-called conditional veto of the bill that we sent back. The elements of this incentive package are overwhelmingly the elements that have been out there for a year. That's just a fact.

Is every bill perfect? Of course not when you're trying to find compromise and common ground, but when you look at the principles and the bedrock elements of this they're, broadly speaking, what's been out there for a year.

Secondly, it's got a lot. Specifically, it's got a lot that we should feel good about. It's got caps. It's got caps. The last program did not have caps. Forget how much they spent. The point was, they could have spent anything. So this has caps. It's got strong compliance standards. It does a lot for communities that have been hit hard by COVID. It's got historical tax preservation, which we've never had in the state. That'll transform communities and I'm going to put Trenton at the top of that list. It's got a revolutionary brownfields approach. It will help fuel our innovation economy unlike any incentive program in any other state in the country.

It has, I can say unequivocally, the strongest labor protections and standards of any incentive package in the United States. That includes both for the labor that builds the stuff and the labor that works in the buildings when they're built. I could go on. Those are all really important. None of what I just said was in the prior set of incentives. None of it. Not most of it, none of it.

I appreciate, by the way, the strength of the advocates who have been there on day one and I just want to say, as it relates to the core principles and the stuff that we care about, and that we should care about, we have not wavered one bit and this is going to transform our state, particularly as we recover from this pandemic. Brian, apologies. You're backlit, I didn't see you there.

**Brian Donohue, News 12 New Jersey:** I'm still here. Governor, I have one for you and one for Colonel Callahan, if I may. But for you, Governor, some people might say that forecasts are not always correct. I would be one of them. But what confidence level do you have that this is the real deal?

For Colonel Callahan, the ban on trucks the DOT Commissioner has announced, what kind of enforcement will the State Police be putting on those trucks if they find them on the highway?

**Governor Phil Murphy:** Yeah, I'll preview Pat's answer. It's going to be deadly serious. Pat and I ourselves, we were there a couple of years ago, we witnessed a tractor trailer jackknifing on a road where they had been banned, literally, from our respective cars but I'll let Pat answer that, and Diane may want to weigh in as well.

Listen, predicting Mother Nature is a bad business to be in. It's a no-win business, but we're not standing here without a high degree of confidence. This is a significant storm. I suspect where it may move around is where it's rain, where it's slush, where it's mixed, where it's snowing. It will do all four of those. Whether we've got the exact lines right, time will tell, but we wouldn't be here without the confidence that this is a serious storm and we have to take it seriously.

And by the way, if we over prepare and the storm under delivers, I would take that 10 out of 10 times relative to under-preparing in a storm that overwhelms us. Pat, come on down.

**Superintendent of the State Police Colonel Pat Callahan:** Thanks, Governor. It'll probably be a Title 39, Motor Vehicle Statute, which is basically disregard of signs because the signage is going to be out there. We have notified the commercial trucking industry this morning. I know the Commissioner was on the phone earlier. That's basically it. It is a 2 point violation and as far as the dollar amount, Brian, I'm really not that sure but that's what the troopers would generally write as the motor vehicle summons.

**Brian Donohue, News 12 New Jersey:** If I can follow up, Governor. Colonel, what do they do with the trucks after they fine them?

**Governor Phil Murphy:** Don't they bring them to Brian's driveway at home?

**Brent Johnson, Star-Ledger:** Do they force them off right at the next exit or what?

**Superintendent of the State Police Colonel Pat Callahan:** You know what? That's up to the trooper's discretion based upon the type of area. Hopefully there's a local truck stop, like I think the 78, the Pilot Truck Stop, I think of the various truck stops and rest areas that they're able to go into. But again, our greatest tool is the trooper's discretion but ultimately we hope that those tractor trailer drivers aren't on our highways this afternoon. Thank you.

**Commissioner of Transportation Diane Gutierrez-Scaccetti:** I think, Brian, to your question about confidence in the forecast. I think all of us have looked at a number of forecasts. Models seem to be lining up. I think there's buffer on both the start time and the end time. I think what we've done is done the best we could to prepare with the information that we have, to make sure that we can move people through. As the Governor said, if I could call her I would, but Mother Nature doesn't generally answer. She does what she wants. You know that from all the years you and I have been working together. I'm looking outside now, I've got boots in the car. I don't know if I'll wear them but you know what? I'm prepared. That's the key. What we're trying to do is be prepared.

As far as where we put the trucks after the Colonel's folks pull them over, it would be to a truck stop. If we're out there helping, because a lot of times our SSP guys are out there, we'll try to get them to the nearest truck stop or off onto a state highway that's not restricted.

**Governor Phil Murphy:** Thanks, Diane. I thought of one other thing I wanted to say that this package has. It's got direct mainstream programs, especially for small businesses. You look at the crushing blow this pandemic has laid on small businesses, restaurants and the like, this is also a huge weapon that we'll have at our disposal.

I think we're going to call it there. I would say this. I'd invite the members of the media to do some B-roll, if you want, in our command center. I think the direction we'll take it is this way to my right. I'm sorry, I didn't see you there. You were also backlit. I apologize.

**Reporter, News 12, New Jersey:** No, that's okay. Given that there are a lot of outages expected, obviously, JCP&L, is there anything that is being done differently this time around in terms of transparency and delays that happened previously? Anything being done differently this time to fix that?

**Governor Phil Murphy:** Look, great question. Let me just finish what I was about to say. We'll invite you to go that way after I answer this question to check out the Command Center to shoot some B-roll and Diane has graciously offered that as has Pat. They've both got assets in that room.

Listen, the big factor, other than the strength of the storm, which is obviously the most important factor, is the extent to which you're prepositioned with assets. That's a DOT reality. It's a State Police reality. It's a BPU and electric provider reality. I was heartened to hear, for instance, for JCP&L last night from their leadership that they already had 200 Ohio women and men crew in New Jersey, and my guess is that there'll be more of that coming. They also do a good job of helping each other out within the state across our domiciled electric service providers.

The concern I would have, I assume Jim joins me in this concern, is the northwest part of the state is not only elevated more than other parts of the state, you've got a lot of vegetation challenges and trees in particular, over lines. As Jim reminded me and his team this morning, in prior storms, including Isaias, some of those trees are no longer there and leaves are off the trees, for the most, part right now. Those are two, while we mourn the loss of some trees, those are two good facts.

But we're going to see and I would just ask everybody to be patient. I mentioned this in our remarks. I always say to these folks, fast and safe. Get power back as fast as you can but do it safely. When you've got winds that are 30, 40, 50 potentially miles an hour, we have got to have the patience to allow them to be as safe as possible because they can't get up on those cherry pickers at those levels of wind.

We'll keep ready.nj.gov as the one place I would send you. If you're going on NJ Transit, it's njtransit.com. We'll be communicating across all of our platforms throughout the day and into tomorrow. I will probably be doing some drive-time interviews to update folks real-time on what we're seeing out across the state. I would just say one last time, on behalf of all of us, Diane, thank you for hosting. Jim, thanks for pinch hitting. Pat and Jared, likewise. On behalf of the five of us, please, please be safe and if at all possible, please stay home. If your power goes out, call it in. Don't go near a downed power line. Remember, even though this is a storm, we're still in a pandemic, so be safe in that regard as well. Many thanks.

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