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Governor Christie's Press Briefing In Newark On Snow Storm Preparedness

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Governor Christie's Press Briefing In Newark On Snow Storm Pre... [video player]

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Transcript:

Governor Christie: Good evening everybody, I just met with and was briefed by our Transportation Emergency Response Officials on the preparation being made to deal with Winter Storm Jonas. Listen, this is going to be a significant storm, but nowhere near the kind of storms we've dealt with over the last six years. Now, I've signed the state of emergency, which gives me certain authorities to be able to close roads and do other things. It's going bring heavy snow to us. Most of the heavy snow will be in the south and central part of the state. National Weather Service is now saying it could be up to two feet. It could be as small a foot. In the northern part of the state, we're looking at 6 inches up to 12 inches. Winds will be high, 25-45 miles per hour with gusts up to 60. And we're only looking at moderate and in some places major coastal flooding, but what I want to remind you of is this flooding will not lead to any evacuations anywhere along the shoreline. So moderate and major are phrases that the National Weather Service uses, but compared to what we've done before, not something that I think is going to be necessitating any type of evacuations along the shore. The worst conditions will be all day on Saturday. The snowfall is expected to stop Saturday night, maybe early Sunday morning. Some white-out conditions and some roads will be impassable due to blowing and drifting snow. We have 3,800 pieces of equipment deployed around the state. The DOT was able to brine all the roadways beforehand, which should allow us to do some very good first run plowing to be able to clear the roads in the first run. DOT has implemented their shelter in place protocol for winter operations from 6:00 am Saturday to Sunday at noon. That means the essential staff will be staying at the DOT facility during the most intense part of the storm to ensure employees are there to go to work on their next shift. Road crews will be out working to clear and the

roads. So if you don't have to drive, don't. The work week is over. You know, the smartest thing for you all to do on Saturday afternoon would be to stay home. Stay where you are. Hopefully tonight by the time you're seeing this you would have gotten all the essentials from the supermarket and elsewhere. Hopefully you're prepared for any emergency matters like with flashlights and your generators and the rest of that. If you do that, than you should be in good shape tomorrow. New Jersey Transit, the Turnpike, the Parkway, South Jersey Transportation Authority have been preparing since Wednesday. It's a full statewide mobilization so we're ready to go. We're also at 100% capacity in terms of your salt supply because it's been a very mild winter so far. We have 228,000 tons of salt. I don't know how much that is but it seems like a lot and I think it will be more than enough for what we have to deal with in the next 24 hours. The DOT is working with state police to have tow trucks available. Make sure we clear disabled vehicles quickly and then we'll have safety service patrols out there if there are any travelers or vehicles that get into distress, DOT will be out there trying making sure we can help. New Jersey Transit has equipped locomotives with plows and is tested and ready. The 750 switch heaters that we have in the system to allow trains to access all tracks and perform all usual movements. As of this evening, I've authorized New Jersey Transit to suspend service following the conclusion of its daily operations today at approximately 2:00 A.M. New Jersey Transit is authorized to resume service throughout the system as conditions allow. To give customers additional travel options during the winter conditions, Transit will offer a system wide cross honoring beginning at midnight tonight enabling customers to use their ticket or pass on any alternate travel mode whether it's rail, light rail or bus including private bus carriers. All MVC offices and inspection stations in the state with Saturday hours will be closed tomorrow. I don't want to try to make MVC employees get out on the road and travel to get there. I doubt they will have many customers anyway so we have closed the MVC offices tomorrow. DEP's Bureau of Coastal Engineering and their flood control folks are monitoring all the forecasts for precipitation and storm surge. They already have boots on the ground, pre-completed pre-storm surveys of our beaches and are doing outreach to towns for sand needs on non-engineered beaches. DEP staff will also assess erosion and flooding, obviously, post storm. Residents should be aware for the potential power outages due to high wind conditions and accumulating snow on power lines and wires. The BPU President, Rich Mroz, has been on conference calls with the power companies and the Public Utility Leadership and advised him to take appropriate measures. I can assure you that he will be in constant conversation over the course of the next 24-48 hours and perhaps longer, depending on how much power we lose, to be able to keep everyone advised as to power situations and if it is lost, how long for potential restoration. BPU has activated a storm cloud reporting system for power companies to collect outages. They are posting it on their website and with links to the utility storm web pages, for reporting of outages and obtaining outage information so we can keep not only the public, but the press as current as possible on outages, where they are and how many. At the same time, residents should prepare themselves for the outages, do all the things that we always tell you to do. Make sure you have plenty of water, nonperishable food items, cold weather clothing and supplies and make sure your cell phone is fully charged. If you have a member of your family dependent on medications or electric powered health equipment, make sure you have a plan to assist them. All of our counties are prepared with sheltering options in case power is lost and folks need to be able to shelter someplace else because of the cold weather. Reach out to your local police forces, they will be able to get you in touch with the county places and where to shelter. If your power goes out, your first contact should be to your power company, identify it as an outage so they can work to restore your service as quickly as possible. The overall message is, we will get through the storm. We always do. That is the way we do things in New Jersey. Do not go on the roads. Be smart. Just do not go on the roads. You do not need to. There is no reason to go out and have an adventure. That adventure could turn out badly. If you absolutely have to go out, during the storm stay behind the salt trucks and plows. Do not mess with them please. They are trying to do the work they need to do. And be safe. We are here. All the people assembled behind me have been working with me since Wednesday to make sure that all preparations are in place. And we will deal with what we need to deal with over the next 24 hours. I will be out tomorrow, all over the state, assessing the situation personally in different regions of the state. You will get a schedule as to where I am going to be because I suspect you will want to be with me. We will make sure that we make that available to everybody as quickly as possible. I will be assessing those situations personally on the ground, throughout the state, and then making any changes or adjustments that we need to make to our preparations. But as I was saying to the folks who are over there doing some of the hard work, this is our seventeenth snow emergency in my six years, so we have done this before. We feel relatively confident in our ability to be able to do it well. But we are not taking our eye off the ball, we are working hard to make sure we get done what we need to get done.

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