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NEWS RELEASE

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Whitman Declares State Ready for Y2K

Gov. Christie Whitman today declared that the state is well prepared for the new millennium. 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.

"We have spent the past 2 years addressing potential Y2K problems in the state's computer systems. We have upgraded, tested and retested all systems. I am confident that the transition to the new millennium will be smooth and uneventful," said Gov. Whitman. "However, should something unforeseen happen, we have contingency plans in place to ensure that state government will be able to continue to serve our residents."

According to Gov. Whitman, the state's Office of Emergency Management will be activated through the New Year's weekend as a precautionary measure.

The Governor also said that Division of Motor Vehicle offices will be closed on Dec. 30 to allow for a complete back-up of all data systems and programs that are part of the central computer system. To accommodate the motoring public, DMV offices will be open until 7:30 p.m. Monday through Wednesday of that week. In addition, the Governor has directed the DMV to extend, for one full month, the expiration dates for any licenses, registrations or other documents that would otherwise expire in December of this year.

"The bottom line is that no one can assure us 100% that we won't be affected by Y2K issues on New Year's eve. We believe we're prepared and that preparation includes being ready to handle the unexpected," said the Governor.

State Police Superintendent Col. Carson Dunbar said that in addition to regular emergency management staff, the Emergency Operating Center (EOC), located at State Police headquarters in West Trenton, will include 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 will also have staff at the EOC.

Col. Dunbar said that the EOC will be fully activated at 8:00 a.m. on Fri., Dec. 31 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 will also be activated beginning at 8:00 a.m. on Fri., Dec. 31 through 8:00 a.m. on Sat., Jan. 1.

Additionally, Col. Dunbar noted 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 will be placed on 24-hour recall status beginning Fri., Dec. 31 through Sat., Jan. 1.

"The State Police has planned appropriately and prepared responsibly for the New Year's eve weekend and Y2K rollover. We don't expect there to be any unusual problems, but if there are, we will be ready to handle them," said Col. Dunbar.

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

"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 are also joining the telephone companies in urging people not to overload phone lines by placing calls right at 12:01 a.m. We all want to celebrate the new millennium with our friends and family, but it would be helpful if people could delay making these calls for a few hours."

Wendy Rayner, the state's Chief Information Officer and the head of the state's Y2K readiness efforts, said that a toll-free number, 1-800-296-2686, has been set up to provide New Jersey citizens with information about Y2K.

Information about Y2K issues is also available on the state's Y2K web site located at <http://www.state.nj.us/cio/nj2000.htm>.

