

News Release

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Heavy snow and winds causing poor visibility across SE Minnesota, MnDOT reminds drivers to use caution

ROCHESTER, Minn. – Motorists are urged to slow down and keep a 10-car length distance behind snowplows, according to the Minnesota Department of Transportation.

By doing so, motorists have a safe distance that allows a snowplow to do its work. On Thursday morning, a semitractor-trailer struck a MnDOT snowplow from behind on northbound Highway 52 north of Rochester. The force of the collision spun the snowplow into the ditch, where it rolled onto its side. The semi crashed into the median. No injuries were reported (see attached State Patrol photo). Six MnDOT snowplows in southeast Minnesota have been struck by vehicles since Jan. 1.

“When you see a snow cloud, you should slow down,” said Kyle Lake, MnDOT assistant district engineer for maintenance in Rochester. “That snow cloud is caused by a MnDOT snowplow operator. By slowing down during snowy, icy conditions, you improve your safety and the safety of others.”

Heavy snowfall and strong winds causing difficult driving conditions and poor visibility across southeast Minnesota, and MnDOT reminds motorists to plan ahead and practice good winter driving habits.

The National Weather Service has issued a Winter Storm Warning for Wabasha and Winona counties in southeast Minnesota and a Winter Weather Advisory for Olmsted, Freeborn, Steele, Rice, Goodhue, Mower, Dodge, Houston and Fillmore counties. According to the National Weather Service, areas in southeast Minnesota could see 3-8 inches of snow followed by wind chills of 15 to 30 below by Friday.

MnDOT snowplow operators will do their part to make highways safe and motorists should remember to:

- **Stay alert** for snowplows, which turn or exit frequently and often with little warning. They also may travel over centerlines or partially in traffic to further improve road conditions.
- **Stay back** at least 10 car lengths behind the plow. Don't drive into a snow cloud.
- **Slow down** to a safe speed for current conditions.
- **Turn on your headlights and wear your seat belt.**
- **Turn off the cruise control.**
- **Be patient** and remember snowplows are working to improve road conditions for your trip.
- **Don't drive distracted.**
- **Check MnDOT's road conditions map** at www.511mn.org

For additional tips on safe winter driving, go to <http://www.dot.state.mn.us/workzone/winter.html>.

In southeast Minnesota there are 101 snowplows that work the state highways in the 11-county MnDOT District 6 plowing 3,774 lane miles. During winter weather events, MnDOT routinely deploys two shifts of drivers in the snowplows, who can keep the snowplowing effort going around the clock by working 12-hour shifts.



A Minnesota Department of Transportation snowplow was struck Thursday morning from behind by a semitractor-trailer on northbound Highway 52 north of Rochester. The force of the collision spun the snowplow into the ditch where it rolled onto its side. The semi crashed into the median. No injuries were reported. (Photo by Minnesota State Patrol)

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