

PennDOT's Response to COVID-19

COVID-19 has led all of us – both as people and as organizations – to take unprecedented measures and precautions. As per Governor Wolf's directive, every action we have taken is aimed at mitigating the virus's spread to protect citizens, employees, and business partners alike. We would rather err on the side of caution and adjust as needed than wish we had taken certain measures.

Within a matter of days, PennDOT closed buildings and offices across the state and successfully transferred essential functions – including traffic management and executive leadership – to remote operations. Maintenance teams are engaged statewide to ensure our roads are kept safe and passable, and our crews remain available for responding to weather events.

This is a challenging time that has called for quick, decisive action with the goal of mitigating COVID-19's spread. We understand the impacts and frustration that result from some of our actions. Please know that we are constantly evaluating how we are moving forward and will continue to convey decisions that impact the public. We appreciate your patience and strongly urge you to follow federal and state guidance to not travel unless you must, and to take every personal precaution to tackle this challenge. We are all in this together.

Area Command

At the onset of COVID-19 impacts in Pennsylvania, PennDOT enacted its Incident Command structure centrally, ensuring consistent alignment with the direction set by Governor Wolf and the PA Department of Health, coordinated through the Pennsylvania Emergency Management Agency (PEMA). All facets of our operation adjusted their respective Continuity of Operations (COOP) plans and deployed components as circumstances warranted. While we frequently follow National Incident Management processes for winter storms or flooding events, the impacts of COVID-19 required many adjustments to our typical approach. The Area Command team and our executive staff have been actively engaged in planning activities every day since the first restrictions were needed.

Driver and Vehicle Services

PennDOT's 75 Driver License Centers and 27 Photo License Centers are some of Pennsylvania government's most public touchpoints. On March 16, In accordance with Governor Wolf's mitigation guidance, we transitioned from regional facility closures to closing all these centers statewide. To help alleviate customer impacts, PennDOT:

- Quickly extended expiration dates for driver's licenses, photo ID cards, learner's permits, vehicle registrations, safety and emissions inspections and disability placards;
- Ensured that the most common customer transactions remain available online; and
- Are addressing mission critical functions to support law enforcement and ensure essential customer service functions are completed.

PennDOT also requested that the U.S. Department of Homeland Security (USDHS) consider extending the October 1, 2020 deadline for REAL ID enforcement. On March 26, USDHS announced that enforcement would be postponed until October 1, 2021.

Updated July 8, 2020

Starting May 8, 2020, some Driver License Centers and Photo License Centers in yellow phase counties will reopen, adhering to restrictions on work and social interaction set by Governor Tom Wolf and the Pennsylvania Department of Health. We are also offering designated hours for customers 60 and older. See the FAQ's below for more information on open locations, available services and safety protocols.

Engineering Districts and County Maintenance Offices

PennDOT District offices were closed in response to guidance relative to COVID-19 mitigation. Many functions of these offices are continuing, thanks to telework and phone and video conferencing. Our staff and our engineering partners are continuing to plan and design projects electronically. Hauling permits are being issued through electronic systems. PennDOT County Maintenance offices also closed, but mission critical processes and crews are assembled to respond to essential safety needs. These small groups are following guidance to minimize close contact and reduce the risk of spreading the virus.

Construction

PennDOT quickly put construction projects on hold – first regionally and now statewide – to minimize exposure for PennDOT and private-sector employees, and for the communities where they live and work. Our staff and contractors have been addressing emergency needs, and on March 31, we announced that [emergency and critical construction projects](#) will continue. The work that continues addresses specific safety need criteria, such as landslide repairs, or critical bridge, tunnel and drainage repairs, and work needed to eliminate roadway restrictions that could impede the ability for the movement of life-sustaining goods and services.

- [View a PDF of the original list of approved projects](#)
- [View a PDF of additional approved projects as of April 20, 2020](#)
- [View a PDF of additional approved projects as of April 27, 2020.](#)

As of May 1, [nearly all PennDOT road and bridge construction projects have restarted](#), with limited exceptions based on project-specific factors, including location and feasibility for social distancing and COVID-19 safety protocols at the jobsite. Work on all projects is conducted in accordance with Centers for Disease Control and Pennsylvania Department of Health guidance as well as a project-specific COVID-19 safety plan, which will include protocols for social distancing, use of face coverings, personal and job-site cleaning protocols, management of entries to the jobsite, and relevant training.

The safety plan, as well as a general framework for restarting construction projects, was developed by a PennDOT-led multidisciplinary team with representation from the construction industry and the consulting engineering community, as well as the Pennsylvania Turnpike Commission and the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA).

Traffic Management Centers

To ensure that essential traffic management systems continue to function, PennDOT transitioned all its Traffic Management Centers (TMC) – the statewide TMC, four regional 24/7 operations and two peak-hour facilities – to remote operations. The first area impacted by the virus was southeastern Pennsylvania, where the highest traffic volumes exist. We quickly migrated these operations to other Traffic Management Centers within the Commonwealth. This successful shift of service enabled us to develop a broader approach, and now all are functioning remotely.

Updated July 8, 2020

Rest Areas and Welcome Centers

PennDOT initially closed all welcome centers and rest areas in a proactive measure to protect employees and the motoring public. These centers have now reopened with additional cleaning and maintenance protocols in place.

Transit

PennDOT recognizes that while public transportation is a critical need for many Pennsylvanians, mitigation recommendations from the national Center for Disease Control and the PA Department of Health within these services can be challenging to deploy. We have been in close communication with and supporting transit agencies throughout the state, as well as Amtrak, as they navigate adjusting schedules and services. Transit agencies have enacted frequent cleaning procedures to reduce traveler exposure risk. County shared ride services are working to ensure critical transportation services are available for those that depend on them.

All these efforts are evolving constantly as circumstances change – a tribute to the dedication of our team, and their keen ability to innovate. Our team in PennDOT Engineering District 6 in southeastern PA and our Driver and Vehicle services teams were the first to work their way through the impacts and have been mentors to their counterparts across the state as the COVID-19 virus effects spread. Many lessons learned in these early actions have aided in the statewide planning process.

We anxiously look forward to the time when COVID-19 is within control, and full transportation services can be restored. In every facet of the business we are developing strategies to phase in services when it is safe to do so and are forging plans to recover from the impacts of this disease. Your diligence in slowing the spread by following the guidance of the Department of Health and Governor Wolf, and your patience as we work through the challenges together is truly appreciated.