

CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY

Speech by Minister Ross, Be Winter Ready Launch

Wednesday 9th November

- This is my first year to be involved as Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport in the Winter Ready campaign and I am delighted to be here. This campaign involves many Government Departments and their agencies working together in preparing for winter and the possibility of severe weather.
- Unfortunately over the past few winters we have seen some very severe bouts of weather, such as storms, strong winds and prolonged ice and snow. As we all know, our transport services are particularly susceptible to disruption during such severe weather.
- During very severe weather it may not be possible for our transport operators to provide all services as normal. However, lessons learned from previous experiences have allowed transport operators to hone their preparedness plans with the aim of avoiding disruption where possible and, where not, to keep disruption to a minimum. Our transport operators, many of whom are represented here today, have contingency plans in place to minimise disruptions arising from severe weather.
- It is also our priority to keep open the national primary road network, important regional roads including public transport routes, and to minimise any delays or disruptions in our sea ports, our airports and on our railways.
- Transport Infrastructure Ireland has continued to work with Local Authorities to ensure an adequate supply of salt is in the country in advance of winter. The quantity of salt available for use this winter will be in excess of 240,000 tonnes nationally for national, regional & local

roads. By comparison, 96,000 tonnes of salt was used over last winter and some 130,000 tonnes was used during the very severe winter of 2010/2011.

This level of stock is well in excess of the annual amounts used over recent winters. In the unlikely event that more stocks are required, procedures are in place to get these.

- An important message of the Be Winter Ready campaign is for all of us to prepare in advance to reduce any risks that we may face. The Road Safety Authority has collaborated with the Office of Emergency Planning this year to produce a leaflet on preparation with practical advice for safe driving in adverse conditions.
- A central part of the RSA's advice is that drivers should prepare their vehicles in advance and, during severe weather, only travel where necessary and take special care when doing so. It's a simple message and one I would ask all motorists to consider when planning their journeys this winter.
- Hopefully the winter ahead will be a mild one. However we cannot plan on that basis and much work has gone into preparing for more severe events. Whatever is ahead of us, I would urge all transport users to be aware of conditions around them and to heed the safety advice being given to them.

