

For Immediate Release

Wayne-Holmes Emergency Coalition
Thomas G. Maurer
Wayne County Sheriff
201 W. North Street
Wooster, Ohio 44691

Q. What do the Emergency Snow Levels mean?

Level 1 - A Level One Snow Emergency means that roads (township and county, mainly secondary) are hazardous with the possibility of blowing and drifting snow. Roads are icy and drivers should use caution, if they choose to drive.

Level 2 - A Level Two Snow Emergency means that roads are hazardous (including primary roads) with blowing and drifting snow a possibility. Only those who feel it is necessary to drive should be on these roadways. Employees should contact their employers to see if they should report to work.

Level 3 - A Level Three Snow Emergency means that roads are closed to all non-essential personnel. No one should be out during these conditions unless it is absolutely necessary to travel. All employees should contact their employer to see if they should report to work. Those traveling on any roadway in the county may subject themselves to citation or arrest.

Q. Who declares the Snow Levels?

The County Sheriff may, pursuant to Ohio Revised Code Sections 311.07 and 311.08, declare a snow emergency and temporarily close all or certain highways, roads and streets within his jurisdiction when such action is reasonably necessary for the preservation of the public peace.

In a 1986 opinion from Ohio Attorney General Anthony J. Celebrezze, Jr. wrote "the sheriff of a county may declare a snow emergency and temporarily close county and township roads within his jurisdiction for the preservation of the public peace."

Ohio Attorney General's Opinion 97-015 issued April 1, 1997, concludes that this authority includes all federal and state highways, county and township roads and Municipal streets.

Q. Who are the emergency or essential employees.

Of course there are the typical responders, the deputies, police officers, firefighters and EMS personnel, and there are the wrecker operators, the highway workers health professionals and utility workers. Additionally there may be maintenance workers, boiler operators, water and sewer plant operators to name some. This is a discussion that needs to occur between the employers and employees. There are jobs that employees must work for the safety of persons and property or the public. There are jobs in industry that must run 24 hours a day or experience a prolonged shutdown of operations. There are businesses that because of regulations may not suspend operations. These situations are best resolved before a potential emergency.

Q. Why are there Snow Emergency Levels?

As the levels increase the object is to restrict travel to reduce the number of vehicles on the roads so that snow crews and responders can do their jobs easier and more safely. Snowdrifts and ice can make conditions so hazardous that it becomes desirable to get the responders off the roads for their safety as well.

As conditions become more extreme the urgency of getting to persons that are stuck or in accidents become more critical, in effect creating a rescue situation. Those rescue requirements expose our responders to unnecessary risk and exposure to elements as well as potential damage to equipment.

When responders are tied up rescuing those persons and moving abandon vehicles in snowdrifts, the roads are not being plowed, utilities are not being restored and unnecessary demands for service are created.

Finally, take the Snow Emergency Levels to be a reinforcement that the weather conditions provided on the radio and TV do exist, do **NOT** go out to drive around on a personal inspection and do not make calls to 9-1-1 for anything other than reporting emergencies or request for emergency services. 9-1-1 is **NOT** an appropriate call for weather and highway conditions. .