

New contracts forecast bright future for National Highways weather teams

The Weather Forecasting Information Service (WFIS) comprises two regional winter season contracts and one all year-round national contract, which will provide National Highways' decision-makers with round-the-clock weather forecasting information to support them in making accurate and timely operational decisions.

The four-year contracts will see the Met Office provide weather advisories and contingency planning forecasts for National Highways' National Traffic Operations Centre (NTOC) in Birmingham, with MetDesk delivering winter service forecasting information in the north and south of England, and DTN in central England.

The new regional contracts will provide weather intelligence for England's strategic road network by providing road maintenance managers with precise location and route-based forecasts. This will help teams make critical informed decisions about weather-related maintenance and management, particularly in adverse weather situations.

James Cross, Weather Forecasting Manager at National Highways, said:

Safety is at the heart of everything we do at National Highways. The comprehensive data provided by our new forecasters gives our teams the confidence they need to ensure that the effects of severe weather on the strategic road network and our customers are mitigated as far as practicable.

The weather forecasts supplied under these contracts provide a robust resource of weather information for our National Traffic Operations Centre and our Asset Delivery area teams.

Between the three contracts, National Highways has access to highly-detailed weather information 24 hours a day, 365 days of the year, and during our operational winter season (October to April) the regional forecasting service provides information used as part of the decision-making process to determine when and where to deploy our fleet of gritters. This includes 24-hour forecasts, two-to-10-day forecasts, site specific forecasts and route-based forecast mapping.

Abigail Oakes, Senior Account Manager at the Met Office, said:

We are delighted to continue our close working relationship with National Highways as a result of winning a four-year contract. Our staff, be that Meteorologists embedded alongside the National Highways team in Birmingham during the winter, or Met Office staff

working from Exeter to deliver and support throughout the year, are proud to continue this partnership, helping to keep the strategic road network safe and operating efficiently.

The presence of the Met Office team, working shoulder-to-shoulder with National Highways colleagues at NTOC, allowed for the best possible support for road users during last week's severe weather.

The network was hampered by the impact of Storm Dudley and Storm Eunice, with the latter prompting National Highways to issue a Red Alert in the south of the country, and urging people not to travel.

Andy Giles, MetDesk Managing Director, added:

We are understandably pleased to have been selected for this contract and are already underway with service delivery. MetDesk shares a common vision with National Highways and we look forward to establishing a close, collaborative working relationship over the next few years.

Renny Vandewege, Vice President of Weather Operations at DTN, said:

Our route-based forecasts provide location-specific information along each gritting route and for each route in total. A hyperlocal forecast can help winter road maintenance managers make critical decisions on where, when, and how to grit across one or more road sections. Our meteorologists with extensive road-specific experience also offer alerting and consultations to provide deeper insights when needed.

When severe weather is forecast drivers should follow this advice:

In snow and ice

Drivers should stick to the main roads where they can and only travel if necessary – drivers are also encouraged to make sure they have a snow kit in their vehicle, including an ice scraper and de-icer, warm clothes and blankets and sunglasses to cope with the low winter sun.

In high winds

There's a particular risk to lorries, caravans and motorbikes, so drivers should slow down and avoid using exposed sections of road if possible.

In heavy rain

Drivers should keep well back from the vehicle in front, gradually ease off

the accelerator if the steering becomes unresponsive, and slow down if the rain and spray from vehicles makes it difficult to see and be seen.

In fog

Drivers should switch on their fog lights and not use lights on full beam as the fog will reflect the light back. If you really cannot see, you should consider finding a safe place to stop until it is safe to continue.

Drivers are advised to follow messages on the overhead signs and listen to radio updates.

Further information on [travelling in winter](#).

General enquiries

Members of the public should contact the National Highways customer contact centre on 0300 123 5000.

Journalists should contact the National Highways press office on 0844 693 1448 and use the menu to speak to the most appropriate press officer.