



# NOAA

NATIONAL OCEANIC AND  
ATMOSPHERIC ADMINISTRATION  
UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE



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## **Targeted highway sign messaging during snow squalls now collaborated between National Weather Service and Mid Atlantic departments of transportation**

This winter, the National Weather Service's Baltimore/Washington Forecast Office has advanced collaboration with Maryland's State Highway Administration, the Virginia Department of Transportation, and the West Virginia Department of Highways to use digital overhead highway signs to alert drivers of snow squalls impacting major highways in northern Virginia, central and western Maryland, and eastern West Virginia.

Although snow squalls in our area are relatively uncommon, they can have a very large impact, especially when they cross a major highway that is below freezing. A motorist traveling at highway speed on an interstate may be driving under partly sunny skies and dry roadways, only to suddenly encounter near zero visibility snow and slick, snow-coated roads. Snow squalls over sub-freezing highways often lead to multi-vehicle pileups that can result in injuries, fatalities and property damage.

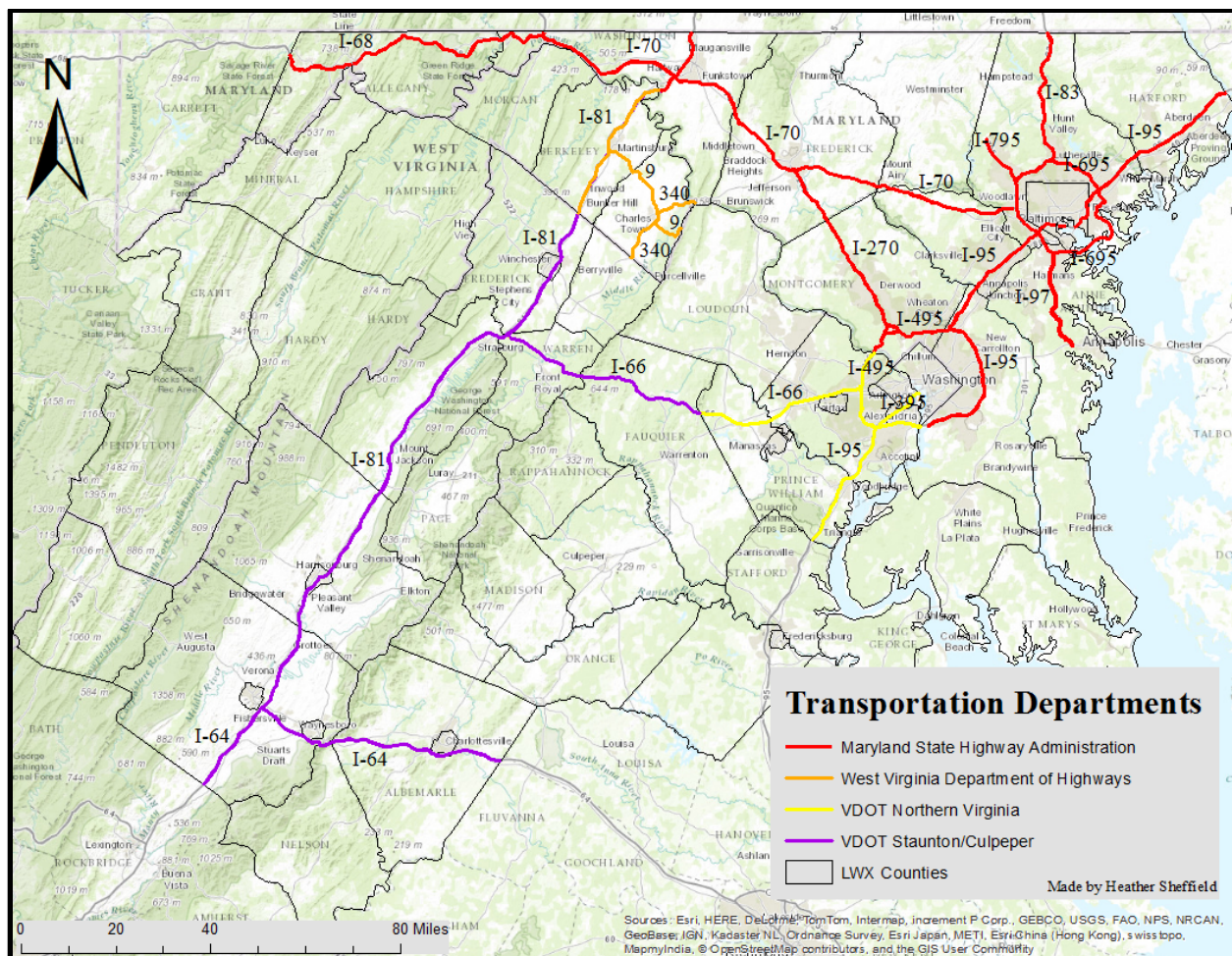
Last winter, one such snow squall crossed Interstate-81 in West Virginia, resulting in multi-vehicle accidents, two fatalities, and over half a dozen injuries.

"This partnership with the state highway departments enables commuters to be notified of dangerous, short duration snow squalls when they may not otherwise get the word," James Lee, Meteorologist in Charge of the NWS Baltimore/Washington forecast office said. "This targets people who are driving on our major highways. If a localized snow squall develops on the road ahead of them, we can alert the appropriate highway department, and they can put a message on their variable message signs."

This collaboration between the NWS and the transportation agencies will help save lives from an uncommon, but dangerous, highway weather threat.

NOAA's National Weather Service is the primary source of weather data, forecasts and warnings for the United States and its territories. NOAA's National Weather Service operates the most advanced weather and flood warning and forecast system in the world, helping to protect lives and property and enhance the national economy. Working with partners, NOAA's National Weather Service is building a Weather-Ready Nation to support community resilience in the face of increasing vulnerability to extreme weather. Visit us online at [weather.gov](http://weather.gov) and on [Facebook](https://www.facebook.com/NOAA).

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**Roads Covered by National Weather Service's Baltimore/Washington Forecast Office's Snow Squall/Variable Message Sign Project**