

General

What is 511 PENNSYLVANIA?

From traffic conditions to carpooling information to route planning, there has never been a more convenient way to find travel information in a one-stop-shop format. 511 Pennsylvania is designed to provide users with real-time traffic information, transportation alternatives and links to tourism hotspots across the Commonwealth. Internet and phone service offering real-time traffic alerts, road conditions and other alerts are part of the integrated 511 Pennsylvania system.

What is the coverage area of 511 Pennsylvania?

[Here is a complete list of roads covered as part of the 511 Pennsylvania system.](#)

What is the history of 511 nationwide?

Before 511, there were more than 300 different phone numbers across the nation providing some sort of highway or public transportation-related information. Recognizing that travelers needed one number to call for travel information, regardless of where they were, the U.S. Department of Transportation petitioned the Federal Communications Commission on March 8, 1999, to designate a nationwide three-digit telephone number for traveler information and 511 was born.

What is the status of 511 nationwide?

511 is a service that is continually expanding nationwide. For a current list of participating states, visit deploy511.org

What types of services are available to the traveler on 511 Pennsylvania?

With 511, travelers can find such information such as:

- Traffic conditions
- Live traffic camera feeds
- Highway construction updates
- Winter road conditions
- Weather conditions and alerts
- Transit information
- Carpool, vanpool and rideshare information

511 Pennsylvania will continually evolve, so look for other services in the future.

How does the information available from 511 Pennsylvania differ from other travel information sources?

511 Pennsylvania gives travelers more control over their daily travels. The service is always there, 24 hours per day, seven days per week, so travelers don't have to wait for local traffic reports. The 511 system provides personalized traffic info tailored specifically for each traveler. Users also have access to public transportation as well as walking and bicycling information.

Where does the information originate?

PennDOT collects information on traffic incidents, construction activities, and winter road conditions through its regional traffic management centers (TMCs). The TMCs receive this information from a variety of sources including PennDOT personnel, construction crews, traffic cameras, and the Pennsylvania State and local police. Other sources of information include the Pennsylvania Turnpike Commission, the National Weather Service, and private traffic information services. Transit information is provided directly by local public transportation agencies.

How often is the information updated?

Live traffic cameras are just that, “live”, and capture incidents as they happen. Traffic condition reports are updated as soon as PennDOT is made aware of an incident that affects the road network. Other information, such as upcoming construction projects are updated regularly by PennDOT staff.

Is the information accurate?

PennDOT provides this information as a public service based upon reports collected from PennDOT staff and other sources. However, these reports are based on the information available at the time of publication and cannot be guaranteed as to accuracy or timeliness. Actual conditions may vary from those reported, though every effort is made to keep information comprehensive and current.

As weather and road conditions change rapidly, the information reported through 511 Pennsylvania should not be used as the only factor in determining your travel decisions. Motorists are cautioned to be alert to changing conditions and adjust their driving accordingly.

What is the service area for Pennsylvania's 511 system?

The 511 system is available statewide.

How can I help make the system better?

Use the system! The more users, the better information we have to learn about what is important to travelers around the commonwealth. Specific suggestions are welcome, just [tell us](#) what is important to you.

How do I access 511?

In Pennsylvania there are two primary ways to access this information, dial 511 from any phone or log on to www.511PA.com

511 Phone

What is the 511 Pennsylvania phone system?

It is an interactive, voice-activated travel information system that you can access by calling 511. To be safe, do not use a hand-held cell phone while driving. Instead, use a hands-free accessory so you can keep both hands on the wheel. Or better yet, call when you are stopped at one of PennDOT's [safety rest areas](#).

How can I access the 511 Pennsylvania telephone system?

Just dial 511 from any phone-landline or cellular-in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. If you are outside Pennsylvania, call 1-877-511-PENN (7366).

Will I be greeted by a person or answering service?

511 Pennsylvania is an automated attendant that will walk the user through what services are available and even offer help with using the service if needed.

What does each call cost?

Calling 511 Pennsylvania is free. However, local airtime minutes or roaming charges will apply (if applicable) as charged by your wireless carrier.

When can I call 511 Pennsylvania?

The system is always on - seven day per week, 24 hours per day!

What language does 511 Pennsylvania understand and speak?

The system is programmed to respond to North American English. While common accents will most likely be understood, the system may not recognize callers with certain speech patterns.

What is 511's relationship to 911?

511 is a traveler information number. 911 is for true emergencies that require police or medical attention. Use 511 whenever you want. Use 911 only for serious emergencies.

Are there shortcuts for navigating through the system quickly?

Using a sophisticated voice-recognition system, 511 allows you to navigate completely hands-free. You also can interrupt at anytime and make your request, there is no need to wait for the system to finish a question before you answer.

For even faster and more efficient navigation, use the following commands:

- To go back to the main menu say "Main menu"
- To stop and back up one level say "Stop"
- To get help say "Help"

- Interrupt (barge-in) the system - once you know what questions will be asked, you can answer as soon as the system starts asking them. You DO NOT need to wait for the system to finish the question before answering.

What can I do when the system cannot recognize what I am saying?

The system might have a difficulty responding to your request if:

- you said something that the system is not programmed to recognize at that particular menu;
- it cannot understand your voice; or
- if there is background noise, such as a radio, people talking near you, or road noise that prevents the system from understanding you.

If the system is having problems recognizing your voice, try the following:

- Speak as clearly as possible
- Minimize background noise
- Ask for help at any time by saying "Help", the system automatically gives help specific to the question just asked. You can also say "What are my choices?" to get a list of all choices recognized at that menu
- If you're using a cell phone and you have a low signal, try calling back when you get a better one.

If your problems persist, dial **0** at any time to switch to numeric touch-tone commands.

Why can't I connect to the 511 Pennsylvania phone system?

Both landline and wireless telephone carriers provide access to 511 Pennsylvania service through the 511 dialing code. Some office telephone systems (PBXs) may need to be reprogrammed to allow the three-digit 511 code. If you dial 511 from inside your office and get a fast busy signal, please check with your office manager or telephone system administrator to ensure that 511 is allowed through your PBX.

If you are unable to reach 511 Pennsylvania by dialing 511 from any phone, your telephone carrier may not yet support this new service. Callers can still access 511 Pennsylvania by dialing 1-877-511-PENN (7366).

How do I report roadway Problems?

For information related to roadway concerns including: reporting pothole locations, storm water and drainage concerns, traffic-related concerns, or property damage related to PennDOT operations, call 1-800-FIX-ROAD.

I have suggestions on how to improve the 511 PA phone system. How can I provide them?

To leave feedback, dial **77** at any time.

511 Web

How do I find information for the highway/road I'm interested in?

Click on the Travel Conditions tab to access an interactive, statewide map with current traffic incidents, congestion, construction alerts and other information. Zoom into the area you are most interested in, then click on any incident or alert.

Can I get real-time public transportation information on this Web site?

PennDOT is exploring ways to include real-time transit information in 511. In the meantime, 511 Pennsylvania provides links to each transit agency's web site and call center (if available) to find the most detailed public transportation information available for your area. Stay tuned for more 511 public transportation options in the future!

Personalized Traveler Alerts

What is 511 PA Personalized Traveler Alerts?

[511 PA Personalized Traveler Alerts](#) is a free service that notifies subscribers of accidents, incidents and construction on state highways and toll roads they choose. Alerts are sent to subscribers' cell phones, PDAs or e-mail accounts.

What type of devices will accept 511 PA Personalized Traveler Alert messages?

Subscribers must confirm that their device's service provider supports e-mail or Short Message Service (SMS) and that their personal accounts include this capability. SMS messages are limited to 160 characters due to the limitations of many cellular phones.

How do I subscribe?

Subscribing to 511 PA Personalized Traveler Alerts is easy! Follow these step by step directions:

- Click "New User"
- Enter a Username and Password
- Enter your First and Last Name
- Enter a valid e-mail address in at least one of the addresses
- Click "Submit"

The information gathered for this service remains private.

Can you send 511 PA Personalized Traveler Alerts to more than one e-mail address or mobile device?

511 PA Personalized Traveler Alerts allows an individual to create a profile with one or two notification addresses. Alerts can be sent to multiple notification addresses if the user sets up separate profiles in his or her account that cover the same segment but have different notification addresses or if the user creates separate accounts. SMS messages are limited to 160 characters due to the limitations of many cellular phones. Please note that each e-mail address registered to 511 PA Personalized Traveler Alerts may be associated with only one account.

Can I receive 511 PA Personalized Traveler Alerts to both an e-mail address and Text (SMS) messages?

Yes.

What is the difference between “Long” and “Short” when setting my e-mail options?

The “Long” format provides more detailed incident and construction information, while the “Short” format is more basic. As a general rule of thumb, you should use “Short” when sending to a cellphone/PDA due to SMS message character limits.

Examples:

Long Format: *Roadwork on I-83 southbound between South Exit 45 - Paxton St/Bass Pro Dr (SWATARA) and South Exit 44A - PA 230/13th St (HARRISBURG) there is a lane restriction. visit 511pa.com*

Short Format: *Roadwork: I-83 southbound South Exit 45 - Paxton St/Bass Pro Dr (SWATARA) - visit 511pa.com*

It won't let me enter my mobile phone number as an e-mail address. How do I receive text (SMS) alerts on my phone?

In order to receive text (SMS) alerts to a phone, you must use the e-mail address format your carrier provides. Formats for a number of common carriers are listed below, where phone number = your 10 digit mobile phone number:

- T-Mobile: `phonenumber@tmomail.net`
- AT&T: `phonenumber@txt.att.net`
- Sprint: `phonenumber@messaging.sprintpcs.com`
- Verizon: `phonenumber@vtext.com`

Contact your carrier to find out what format you need to use if your carrier is not listed above.

How many devices/e-mail addresses can I sign up?

Subscribers may provide two notification addresses per account.

What is a Profile and how many can I have?

A Profile is a route that is used to reach a destination. A subscriber to 511 PA Personalized Traveler Alerts can maintain up to 8 profiles. Each profile can contain a maximum of three roadways.

How do I determine my Profile?

A typical Profile would take you from your home to your office.

For example, if you lived in York and commuted to Harrisburg, your profile could be:

- I-83 – Exit 18 to Exit 43
Under this scenario, you can select sections or roads, the time of day as well as the days of the week.
- Choose "Roadway"
- Choose the "Start Point" and "End Point" for your first segment.
- Click "Add"
- Choose the "Start Point" and "End Point" for your second segment.
- Click "Add"
- Choose the "Beginning" and "Ending" timeframe for which you would like to receive traffic alerts.
- Choose the days of the week on which you would like to receive alerts.
- Select the delivery method for your alerts. You may choose e-mail or an SMS message to your cell phone.
- Name your profile. Use a name that you can easily remember such as "Work" or "Daily Commute."
- Check the "Activate" box and then click "Submit."

You will receive real time information on incidents and construction during this timeframe.

PennDOT is not responsible for inadvertent errors, omissions or delayed delivery of PA Personalized Traveler Alert messages.

Are delivery charges associated with SMS and pager messages?

Standard text message rates apply - this is not a PennDOT fee. PennDOT does not charge for delivery.

I subscribed, but I entered the wrong e-mail address. What should I do now?

You may [log in to your 511 PA Personalized Traveler Alerts account](#) using your username and password and select the "User Preferences" menu option. You may change your e-mail address in this menu area.

I subscribed, but I want to change my profile's routes, days or times. What should I do now?

[Log in to your "My 511" PA Personalized Traveler Alerts account](#) using your username and password. You will find a list of profile(s) that you have created. You must select the "Edit" button next to the profile name that you wish to change. Your profile details will be displayed for editing purposes. In order to change a route, remove the route(s) about which you no longer desire notification. Add new route(s) about which you wish to receive notification. In order to change your days for notification, select the day(s) that you wish to change. In order to change the time period for which you would like to be notified, select time(s) from the dropdown menu. When you have changed the days and/or times, select the "Submit" button.

Is there a way to confirm my subscription to 511 PA Personalized Traveler Alerts?

No, but you may log in to your account and review the information.

How do I retrieve a forgotten Username or Password?

[Go to the 511 PA Personalized Traveler Alerts login page.](#)

- Select the "Forgot your Username or Password" link.
The system will require a notification address that matches a notification address of your account.
- Enter the e-mail address and select "Submit."

The system will notify you of your Username and Password via the address you provided. The password can be readjusted after you log back into the system by accessing the "Change Password" feature.

How do I unsubscribe from 511 PA Personalized Traveler Alerts?

[Log in to your 511 PA Personalized Traveler Alerts account](#) with your Username and Password. Select the "Unsubscribe" option. Confirm your desire to unsubscribe. Upon confirmation 511 PA Personalized Traveler Alerts will stop contacting you within 24 hours.

My e-mail address has changed. How can I continue to receive 511 PA Personalized Traveler Alerts?

You may [log in to your 511 PA Personalized Traveler Alerts account](#) with your Username and Password, select the "User Preferences" option and change your e-mail address.

What will happen to personal information that I provide?

The information is stored in a database for notification purposes only.

I am not receiving the 511 PA Personalized Traveler Alerts. Why?

You can start receiving alerts by taking the following steps:

- Check your profile(s) and ensure that the profile is active and covers your preferred alert area and time period. If the profile appears to fit these criteria, please provide specific information in the Feedback area of 511 PA Personalized Traveler Alerts. PennDOT will investigate the situation.
- If you viewed alerts in the Possible Travel Delays list but did not receive the alerts in your notification account, your notification account may have rejected the messages. You may wish to contact your service provider and state that you did not receive alerts that were sent to your from PA-Alert@511pa.com.
- Check your SPAM folder to see if your Internet Service Provider (ISP) is filtering the messages. Follow your ISP's instructions in order to prevent your ISP from filtering the messages.

How do I prevent SPAM filters from blocking 511 PA Personalized Traveler Alerts?

- Inform your provider that you have signed up for the PA-Alert@511pa.com notification service and would like to ensure that the alerts are delivered, rather than intercepted as SPAM.
- Add PA-Alert@511pa.com to your address book. Many providers do not filter messages from addresses found in your personal address book.

My SPAM filter is blocking 511 PA Personalized Traveler Alerts. What should I do?

Most notification providers allow you to specify a domain, such as 511pa.com, as non-SPAM. Follow your notification provider's directions or contact your notification provider on this issue.

My e-mail provider will not allow 511 PA Personalized Traveler Alerts. What steps should they take to make sure alerts are not treated as SPAM or deleted completely?

Your notification provider should ensure that it is following its process for white-listing PA-Alert@511pa.com.

511 Winter Road Conditions

When can I get information on winter road conditions from 511 PA?

Winter road conditions are available on 511 PA between November 1st and April 30th.

Where does this information come from?

Winter road conditions are reported by PennDOT maintenance staff based on current field conditions. Although drivers may experience varying conditions at isolated locations, 511PA reports the predominant road condition within a county for each 511PA network roadway.

What roads does 511 PA report winter road conditions for?

Winter road conditions are available for all roads on the 511 PA Roadway Network, with the exception of PA Turnpike roads. For PA Turnpike road conditions, call the PA Turnpike's 24 hour trip line at 866-976-8747, or see the [PA Turnpike's travel conditions map](#).

What do the various road conditions mean?

Clear and Wet: The road surface is generally free of snow and/or ice, but is wet. There may be occasional areas having snow or ice accumulations.

Snow/slush covered – Wheel Tracks: There are accumulations of up to 2 inches of loose snow or slush on the road surfaces, with wheel tracks exposed down to the road surface.

Snow/slush covered: There are continuous stretches of the road that are covered with packed snow, and may have loose snow on top of the packed snow.

Icy: The road surface is completely covered with packed snow and/or ice. In addition, there may be loose snow on top of the icy/packed snow surface.

Impassable: This section of road is temporarily impassable. This may be the result of severe weather (causing low visibility, etc) or the road conditions – drifting, excessive unplowed snow, etc.

It's November 30th and it's raining, but 511 is not reporting that a nearby roadway is wet. Why not?

Winter road conditions are only reported when there is the potential for freezing (temperature below 35 degrees), so if the temperature is well above freezing, no road conditions will be reported even though the road surface may be wet.