



# State of North Carolina

## JOSH STEIN

### GOVERNOR

January 21, 2026

#### EXECUTIVE ORDER NO. 31

#### DECLARATION OF A STATE OF EMERGENCY AND TEMPORARY WAIVER AND SUSPENSION OF MOTOR VEHICLE REGULATIONS

**WHEREAS**, current weather projections indicate that a winter storm is anticipated to hit the State of North Carolina starting on or about January 24, 2026, causing significant impacts; and

**WHEREAS**, the projected winter storm will likely damage public and private property and could seriously disrupt essential utility services and systems; and

**WHEREAS**, the anticipated impacts from the projected winter storm constitute a state of emergency as defined in N.C. Gen. Stat. §§ 166A-19.3(6) and 166A-19.3(20); and

**WHEREAS**, the projected winter storm is likely to impact, and thereby create a state of emergency throughout, the entire state; and

**WHEREAS**, certain measures are necessary to ensure the protection and safety of North Carolina residents and to coordinate the emergency response among state and local entities and officials; and

**WHEREAS**, N.C. Gen. Stat. § 166A-19.1(3) provides that it is the responsibility of the Governor, state agencies, and local governments to “[p]rovide for the rapid and orderly rehabilitation of persons and restoration of property”; and

**WHEREAS**, N.C. Gen. Stat. § 166A-19.1(4) provides that it is the responsibility of the Governor, state agencies, and local governments to “[p]rovide for cooperation and coordination of activities relating to emergency mitigation preparedness, response, and recovery among agencies and officials of this state and with similar agencies and officials of other states and with other private and quasi-official organizations”; and

**WHEREAS**, N.C. Gen. Stat. §§ 166A-19.10 and 166A-19.20 authorize the Governor to declare a state of emergency and exercise the powers and duties set forth therein to direct and aid in the response to, recovery from, and mitigation against emergencies; and

**WHEREAS**, N.C. Gen. Stat. § 166A-19.10(3) authorizes the Governor to delegate any gubernatorial authority vested in him under the Emergency Management Act, and to provide for the subdelegation of that authority; and

**WHEREAS**, under N.C. Gen. Stat. § 166A-19.30(b)(3) the Governor may, with the concurrence of the Council of State, regulate and control the flow of vehicular traffic and the operation of transportation services; and

**WHEREAS**, under N.C. Gen. Stat. § 166A-19.30(b)(4), the Governor may, with the concurrence of the Council of State, may waive a provision of any regulation or ordinance of a state agency which restricts the immediate relief of human suffering; and

**WHEREAS**, the anticipated impacts from the projected winter storm may result in extensive damage, including widespread power outages throughout the state that will require the vehicles bearing equipment and supplies for utility restoration and debris removal to be moved through North Carolina on the interstate and intrastate highways; and

**WHEREAS**, the uninterrupted supply of electricity, fuel oil, diesel oil, gasoline, kerosene, propane, liquid petroleum gas, food, water, and medical supplies to residential and commercial establishments is essential before, during, and after the projected winter storm, and any interruption in the delivery of those commodities threatens the public welfare; and

**WHEREAS**, the prompt restoration of utility services is essential to the safety and well-being of the State's residents; and

**WHEREAS**, the Governor has found that residents may suffer losses and further widespread damage within the meaning of N.C. Gen. Stat. §§ 166A-19.3 and 166A-19.21(b); and

**WHEREAS**, 49 C.F.R. § 390.23 allows the Governor of a State to suspend the rules and regulations under 49 C.F.R. Part 390 if the Governor determines that an emergency condition exists; and

**WHEREAS**, nothing contained in this declaration shall be construed as an exemption from the controlled substances and alcohol use and testing requirements (49 C.F.R. Part 382), the commercial driver's license requirements (49 C.F.R. Part 383), the financial responsibility (insurance) requirements (49 C.F.R. Part 387), operating authority (49 C.F.R. Part 365), applicable size and weight requirements, ill or fatigued operator (49 C.F.R. § 392.3) or any other portion of the regulations not specifically identified; and

**WHEREAS**, pursuant to N.C. Gen. Stat. § 166A-19.70(g), upon the recommendation of the North Carolina Commissioner of Agriculture and the existence of an imminent threat of severe economic loss of livestock, poultry, or crops ready to be harvested, the Governor shall direct the North Carolina State Highway Patrol ("NCSHP") to temporarily suspend weighing vehicles used to transport livestock, poultry or crops ready to be harvested; and

**WHEREAS**, this suspension does not permit the gross weight of any vehicle or combination to exceed the safe load carrying capacity established by the North Carolina Department of Transportation ("DOT") on any bridge pursuant to N.C. Gen. Stat. § 136-72, or to permit the operation of a vehicle when a law enforcement officer has probable cause to believe the vehicle is creating an imminent hazard to public safety; and

**WHEREAS**, pursuant to N.C. Gen. Stat. § 166A-19.70, the Governor may declare that the health, safety, or economic well-being of persons or property requires that the maximum hours of service for drivers prescribed by N.C. Gen. Stat. § 20-381 should be waived for (1) persons transporting essential fuels, food, water, non-alcoholic beverages, medical supplies, feed for livestock and poultry; (2) persons transporting livestock, poultry, and crops ready to be harvested; and (3) vehicles used in the restoration of utility and transportation services; and

**WHEREAS**, the Governor has sought and obtained Concurrence from the Council of State, as that term is defined in N.C. Gen. Stat. § 166A-19.3(2d) on the provisions of this Executive Order requiring concurrence; and

**WHEREAS**, the Governor has documented the contact and response of each Council of State member and has released the concurrence, non-concurrence, or non-response of each member by position on the website on which this Executive Order is published.

**NOW, THEREFORE**, pursuant to the authority vested in me as Governor by the Constitution and the laws of the State of North Carolina, **IT IS ORDERED:**

**Section 1.**

I hereby declare that a state of emergency, as defined in N.C. Gen. Stat. §§ 166A-19.3(6) and 166A-19.3(20) exist in the State of North Carolina due to the anticipated impacts from the projected winter storm.

For purposes of this Executive Order, the emergency area is the entire State of North Carolina ("the Emergency Area").

## **Section 2.**

I order all state and local government entities and agencies to cooperate in the implementation of the provisions of this declaration and the provisions of the North Carolina Emergency Operations Plan (“the Plan”).

## **Section 3.**

I delegate to the Secretary of the North Carolina Department of Public Safety (“DPS”), or the Secretary’s designee, all power and authority granted to and required of me by Article 1A of Chapter 166A of the North Carolina General Statutes to implement the Plan and deploy the State Emergency Response Team to take the appropriate actions necessary to promote and secure the safety and protection of the populace in North Carolina.

## **Section 4.**

The Secretary of DPS (“Secretary”), as the Chief Coordinating Officer for the State of North Carolina, shall exercise the powers prescribed in N.C. Gen. Stat. § 143B-602.

## **Section 5.**

I further direct the Secretary, or his designee, to seek assistance from any and all agencies of the United States Government as may be needed to meet the emergency and to seek reimbursement for costs incurred by the state in responding to this emergency.

## **Section 6.**

The Commander of the NCSHP (“Commander”), in conjunction with the DOT, shall waive the maximum hours of service for drivers prescribed pursuant to N.C. Gen. Stat. § 20-381. In addition, NCSHP shall, pursuant to N.C. Gen. Stat. § 166A-19.70(g), temporarily suspend weighing pursuant to N.C. Gen. Stat. § 20-118.1 vehicles used to transport livestock, poultry, livestock or poultry feed, or crops ready to be harvested.

## **Section 7.**

With the Concurrence of the Council of State, and subject to Section 8 below, the Commander, in conjunction with DOT, shall waive enforcement of specific size and weight restrictions and penalties arising under N.C. Gen. Stat. §§ 20-116, 20-118, and 20-119, specific registration requirements and penalties arising under N.C. Gen. Stat. §§ 20-86.1 and 20-382, and certain registration and filing requirements and penalties arising under N.C. Gen. Stat. §§ 105-449.45, 105-449.47, and 105-449.49 for vehicles supporting emergency equipment, services, and supplies in the Emergency Area.

## **Section 8.**

Notwithstanding the waivers set forth above, size and weight restrictions and penalties, the following conditions apply:

- a. Commercial vehicles operating outside the normal weight, height, and length restrictions under the authority of this State of Emergency shall be issued special permits by the DOT. Said vehicles shall be subject to any special conditions DOT and NCSHP may list on applicable permits. Nothing in this Executive Order shall be construed to allow any vehicle to exceed weight limits posted for bridges and like structures, nor shall anything in this Executive Order be construed to relieve compliance with restrictions other than those specified in this Executive Order or from any statute, rule, order, or other legal requirement not specifically waived herein.
- b. Oversize permits may be issued by the DOT, Oversize/Overweight Unit, during regular business hours, Monday through Friday, by calling 1-888-221-8166 or contacting them through the online portal at <https://connect.ncdot.gov/business/trucking/Pages/overpermits.aspx>

## **Section 9.**

With Council of State Concurrence, vehicles referenced under Sections 7 and 8 of this Executive Order shall be exempt from the following registration requirements, except where otherwise

noted below:

- a. The requirement to obtain a temporary trip permit in N.C. Gen. Stat. § 105-449.49.
- b. The requirement of filing a quarterly fuel tax return.
- c. The registration requirements under N.C. Gen. Stat. §§ 20-382.1 and 20-382 concerning interstate for-hire authority; however, vehicles shall maintain the required limits of insurance as required.
- d. Non-participants in North Carolina's International Registration Plan and International Fuel Tax Agreement will be permitted to enter North Carolina in accordance with the exemptions identified by this Executive Order.

#### **Section 10.**

The size and weight exemption for vehicles will be allowed on all DOT-designated routes, except those routes designated as light traffic roads under N.C. Gen. Stat. § 20-118. Size and weight exemptions shall not be in effect on bridges posted pursuant to N.C. Gen. Stat. § 136-72.

#### **Section 11.**

Pursuant to 49 C.F.R. § 390.23, I hereby waive 49 C.F.R. § 395.3 for vehicles transporting that are for use in (1) providing direct assistance supporting emergency relief efforts, including transporting essential fuels, food, water, non-alcoholic beverages, medical supplies, feed for livestock and poultry, (2) transporting livestock, poultry, and crops ready to be harvested, or (3) the restoration of utility and transportation services in response to the projected winter storm in North Carolina and the affected states for fourteen (14) days.

Upon request by law enforcement officers, exempted vehicles must produce documentation sufficient to establish that their loads are for use in providing direct assistance supporting emergency relief efforts, including transporting (1) providing direct assistance supporting emergency relief efforts including transporting essential fuels, food, water, non-alcoholic beverages, medical supplies, feed for livestock and poultry, (2) transporting livestock, poultry, and crops ready to be harvested, or (3) the restoration of utility and transportation services in response to the projected winter storm.

Direct assistance terminates when a driver or commercial motor vehicle is used in intrastate/interstate commerce to transport cargo or provide services that are not in support of emergency relief efforts related to the projected winter storm in North Carolina, or when the motor carrier dispatches a driver or commercial motor vehicle to another location to begin operations in commerce. (49 C.F.R. § 390.23(b)).

Upon termination of direct assistance to emergency relief efforts related to transporting (1) providing direct assistance supporting emergency relief efforts including transporting essential fuels, food, water, non-alcoholic beverages, medical supplies, feed for livestock and poultry, (2) transporting livestock, poultry, and crops ready to be harvested, or (3) the restoration of utility and transportation services in response to the projected winter storm in North Carolina or affected states, the motor carrier and driver are subject to the requirements of 49 C.F.R. § 395.3, except that a driver may return empty to the motor carrier's terminal or the driver's normal work reporting location without complying with 49 C.F.R. § 395.3. When a driver is moving from emergency relief efforts to normal operations, a 10-hour break is required if the total time a driver operated, whether conducting emergency relief efforts or a combination of emergency relief efforts and normal operations, equals or exceeds fourteen (14) hours.

#### **Section 12.**

NCSHP shall enforce the conditions set forth in Sections 6 through 11 of this Executive Order in a manner that does not endanger North Carolina motorists.

#### **Section 13.**

This Executive Order does not prohibit or restrict lawfully possessed firearms or ammunition or impose any limitation on the consumption, transportation, sale, or purchase of alcoholic beverages.

#### **Section 14.**

Pursuant to N.C. Gen. Stat. § 166A-19.23, this declaration triggers the prohibition against excessive pricing as provided in N.C. Gen. Stat. §§ 75-37 and 75-38 in the Emergency Area.

**Section 15.**

This Executive Order is effective immediately. Section 11 of this Executive Order shall remain in effect for fourteen (14) days. The remainder of this Executive Order shall remain in effect for thirty (30) days, unless modified, superseded, or rescinded.

**IN WITNESS WHEREOF**, I have hereunto signed my name and affixed the Great Seal of the State of North Carolina at the Capitol in the City of Raleigh, this 21st day of January in the year of our Lord two thousand and twenty-six.

  
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Josh Stein  
Governor

**ATTEST:**

  
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Elaine F. Marshall  
Secretary of State

