

### Snowstorm Scenario

In late January 2011, Washington DC experienced the debilitating impact of a repeat snowstorm that stranded tens of thousands of people on the roads, while trying to commute home. Due to the predicted onslaught of winter weather, the Federal Government shut down at 3 p.m., that day. As is typical in the DC Metro area, a majority of local businesses and organizations followed the Federal Government's lead, and shut down as well.

The nation's capital is consistently ranked among the top five worst U.S. cities for traffic. Normal weekday afternoon rush hour is a nightmare to sit through, as people try to leave the city and head home according to their varied day-end schedules. When this storm hit, though, all DC area commuters were attempting to leave the city at the same time. To make the mass evacuation worse, the snow began rapidly falling right as businesses were letting out. Thousands of cars, buses and metro trains stopped in traffic, because the roads hadn't been pretreated due to previous rainfall.

That night, it took more than 12 hours for many to get home, with hundreds of cars stranded on the side of the road, looking eerily like a deserted war zone. City commuters were outraged as this snowstorm turned into a snow disaster.

While many businesses typically only consider sheltering in place during a dirty bomb type scenario (if they've even planned for sheltering in place at all), this snowstorm could have been a great opportunity to provide employees with the chance to stay in the office and shelter in place over night. With proper planning, businesses can and should protect their employees from the dangerous roads, instead of always shutting the doors and ushering everyone out of the building and into the chaotic and potentially tragic conditions outside.