



Industry Briefs

I-84 to close overnight at Hilgard Interchange starting March 18

Contractors for the Oregon Department of Transportation will close Interstate 84 for five nights in northeastern Oregon at the Hilgard Interchange. The interchange is located seven miles west of La Grande at I-84 Exit 252. The closures will occur the nights of Tuesday, March 18, through Thursday, March 20 and from Monday, March 24 through Tuesday, March 25, from 8 p.m. each night to 6 a.m. the following morning.

I-84 traffic will detour around the work zone using the freeway off-ramps and on-ramps in each direction. Prior to the detour, the freeway will be reduced to single-lane travel, with traffic control and detour signs providing advanced notice. Motorists are cautioned to slow down, watch for detour signs and drive with extra care in the area.

"Traffic will need to really slow down through this work zone, especially eastbound trucks coming down the Spring Creek Grade from Pendleton," says ODOT Public Information Officer Tom Strandberg. "The eastbound detour is at the bottom of a steep grade and instead of leveling out and following the freeway under the bridge traffic will turn right and continue heading downward using the off-ramp. At the bottom of the ramp is a sharp left turn to reconnect to the freeway on the opposite side of the interchange."

The detour for westbound traffic will be less challenging.

"Westbound traffic headed towards Pendleton will hit the detour after several winding turns that follow the Grande Ronde River," says Strandberg. "Motorists will take the exit 252 off-ramp to the top of the overpass bridge, then re-enter the freeway just before the steep climb into the Blue Mountains," said Strandberg.

The five-night freeway closure schedule may change due to winter weather. Contractors will not close I-84 in icy or snowy conditions.

Drivers should also watch for occasional daytime single-lane closures in both directions of I-84 near the Hilgard interchange beginning the week of March 10.

Extra police patrols will help to enforce safe driving through the work zone and ensure traffic moves smoothly. Drivers should remember that traffic fines double in highway work zones.

This closure will allow workers to begin building a new bridge over I-84. The work is part of a project to replace one bridge and repair five others on I-84 between Boardman and La Grande. ODOT's contractor, Wildish Standard Paving, will complete construction work this fall.

"It will be another busy construction season throughout Oregon as ODOT works to maintain, improve and keep the highway system as safe as possible," says Strandberg. "We need all travelers to help keep Oregon roadways safe by slowing down and paying extra attention, particularly when driving through construction work zones."