

Road work calls for drivers to be safe, patient

Memorial Day marks start of busy construction season

Memo to motorists: Don't sue the city when you get hot tar on your car after ignoring barricades and driving on fresh pavement.

And don't cry "foul" when you get a hefty ticket for speeding through a work zone.

The summer road-construction season is nearly upon us, so be prepared. Anywhere you drive, there's a good chance you'll encounter road work and possibly delays. Frustrating as the detours or delays may be, the construction projects are one price we pay for having a car- and truck-oriented society.

In the end, the work will create safer, more resilient roads. We'll stave off Los Angeles- or Seattle-style traffic congestion a little longer. Our bridges will be more likely to survive an earthquake, as well as plain ol' wear and tear. And, as ruts and potholes disappear, we'll spend less on vehicle alignments and replacement tires.

As a general rule, flaggers and construction companies do a good job of alerting motorists to detours, delays and hazards. When crews don't, motorists should not hesitate to politely file a complaint with the overseeing agency.

But more often it's the motorists causing the problems. They forget to leave home or work early because of detours — and take their anger out on

Upcoming road work

Here are some of the road projects planned in Marion and Polk counties this summer:

POLK COUNTY	MARION COUNTY	SALEM
<p>About 100 miles of county road will be repaved as part of a \$20 million bond measure approved by voters last fall. Check the county Web site for weekly updates of repair schedules.</p>	<p>Repair C Street Bridge in Silverton; the bridge will close June 19 and reopen before Homer Davenport Days.</p> <p>Finish bridge replacement on Jefferson-Marion Highway.</p> <p>Install sidewalks and curbs in Turner.</p> <p>Create left-turn lane at Cordon Road and Pennsylvania Drive SE outside Salem.</p>	<p>Finish replacement of water and sewer lines, which has closed part of Market Street NE.</p> <p>Replace water lines on Center Street NE, which will require three-day closure of part of street.</p> <p>Rebuild part of Sunnyview Road NE from 17th to Fairgrounds.</p> <p>Repave part of Cherry Avenue NE.</p> <p>Replace Shelton Ditch bridge, requiring closure of 25th Street SE for much of the summer.</p> <p>Light paving downtown during evenings and weekends, as well as street repairs.</p> <p>One-day or several-hour closures of various streets for routine maintenance.</p>
<p>KEIZER</p> <p>Replace Claggett Creek bridge on Chemawa Road NE. Chemawa will close between 13th Avenue and Verda Lane as of June 4.</p> <p>Finish widening project at Lockhaven Drive and River Road N.</p>		

the flaggers. They zip through work zones as if the designated construction speed limits are irrelevant, sometimes endangering themselves as well as construction workers.

Motorists' impatience seems to intensify when it comes to smaller, local projects.

Area public works directors caution motorists to allow at least two hours for street resealing or other repairs to dry. But too often, drivers will ignore the warning signs, plow through the oil slurry, get tar on their cars — and then threaten to sue.

This summer, drivers will need to

Online

For links to state and local road information Web sites, see this editorial at StatesmanJournal.com. On the Opinion page, you also can read a guest opinion about summertime construction by Matt Garrett, the director of the Oregon Department of Transportation.

keep their common sense along with their patience.

State officials say that Memorial Day marks the kickoff of one of Oregon's busiest road-construction seasons ever. Interstate 5 alone has 19 active construction zones in Oregon, including the work under way in South Salem.

Much of the state work involves repairing or replacing bridges. Sixty-three highway bridges are under construction throughout the state, 55 projects will begin later this year and 56 have been completed since the \$1.3 billion bridge program began in 2003.

Local governments also face numerous projects, from Keizer's upcoming closure of Chemawa Road NE for a bridge replacement to about 100 miles of road repairs in Polk County and new traffic signals in Stayton and Silverton.

Before heading out, it's worth checking the statewide travel conditions by calling 511 or going online to www.TripCheck.com, as well as going to StatesmanJournal.com and local governments' road-repair Web sites.

Be safe. Be patient. Be considerate as you drive, and the road construction season will be more pleasant for all of us.