



Oregon Department of Transportation

NEWS RELEASE

Region 4 *Wasco, Sherman, Gilliam, Jefferson, Wheeler, Deschutes, Crook, Klamath and Lake Counties*

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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ODOT to close McKenzie Pass Highway Nov. 1

McKENZIE BRIDGE – Oregonians have one last weekend to enjoy a drive along the scenic McKenzie Pass Highway before it closes for the winter.

In a sure sign winter has arrived in the Oregon Cascades, **the Oregon Department of Transportation will close the McKenzie Pass Highway (OR 242) for the season at noon on Thursday, Nov. 1.** The upcoming closure follows two weeks of early season snowfall at the pass elevation of 5,325 feet.

ODOT would normally have closed the highway when the early snow arrived. Due to a construction project that kept the west side of the highway closed to vehicle traffic until early September, ODOT elected to remove the snow and keep OR 242 open a bit longer.

The highway is the original alignment of the McKenzie Highway (OR 126) between Springfield and Sisters, and is open only during the summer travel season. It opened to vehicle traffic this year on Sept. 2, following a successful project to realign and improve a grade.

The 60-day open period is well below average compared with most years. ODOT opened the highway to pedestrians and cyclists on May 24 before closing it in late June for the road improvement project. The longest open period occurred in 1934, when the pass was open for 250 days. The shortest open period (due to weather) was 90 days in 1999. The highway has closed as early as Oct. 18 (in 1996) and as late as Jan. 10 (1939). The earliest open date was March 21 (in 1934) and the latest was July 29 (in 1999) due to heavy snow.

Built in the mid-1930s, the highway became a seasonal scenic highway in the 1960s with the completion of the Clear Lake-Belknap Springs section of OR 126. Even during its tenure as the main route between the southern Willamette Valley and central Oregon, the narrow, twisting roadway and high elevation made the highway too difficult to maintain and keep clear during the winter months. During the summer, about 300 cars a day travel the highway.

##ODOT##