



**Oregon
Department
of Transportation**

Camping on ODOT property

What's happening

Our goal is to maintain a safe, secure and effective transportation system for everyone.

Camping along state highways is against the law and not an appropriate use of the transportation system. ODOT balances public health safety with transportation system users safety and land management responsibilities.

Throughout the country and in Oregon, the number of camps have grown in number and size. In Oregon, camps increased statewide in cities, along highways, and in neighborhoods.

COVID-19 guidance issued by the Centers for Disease Control recommended that campers/unsheltered people be allowed to stay in one place during the height of the pandemic.

ODOT continued site management in many areas, doing activities such as removing trash and mowing. We worked with our community partners to address concerns at specific camps. We looked at the safety of the location, weighed with the impact on the transportation system, community and public health. There were campsite areas restored in coordination with local communities.

Oregon's COVID-19 emergency restrictions were lifted in late June. Over the summer, ODOT began working with local partners on ways to address this challenging issue. Prioritizing this work will take time. We are coordinating with our partners to ensure that our roads are safe, and our partners can help those who need assistance receive it.

Camping along state highways is unsafe and restoration is expensive

Camping along state highways is unsafe for campers and highway users and is not allowed.

ODOT responds to public concerns about camping along state highways.

Our efforts are designed to respect the circumstances of the campers and address the concerns of road users and neighbors, while following state law.

Camping can create environmental hazards, cause wildfires, and interfere with ODOT's ability to safely maintain the state highway system, including roads, bridges, vegetation and bicycle and pedestrian paths.

Camping often takes over space that should be available to everyone for transportation purposes.

From July 1, 2019 to June 30, 2020, ODOT spent about \$2.9 million statewide restoring ODOT property to use as part of the transportation system following camping.

People camping along state highways are often homeless or unsheltered

We work closely with our community partners (local governments, law enforcement, and social service agencies) throughout the state.

ODOT is the steward of the state's transportation system. Recognizing that the causes and impacts of homelessness are beyond our scope, we work closely with our community partners (local governments, law enforcement, and social service agencies) throughout the state on this complex problem.

This effort requires significant help and support from others

ODOT relies on local governments and social service agencies to offer necessary assistance to the people camping.

We provide notice to people camping as we are required to do under law on our properties that are not posted with no trespassing signs.

This is intended to allow campers to relocate belongings before the area is restored to availability for the transportation system.

The Oregon State Police and local law enforcement provide law enforcement support.

This effort involves a number of other agencies and organizations. Private contractors, inmate crews and hazardous materials removal companies often assist ODOT maintenance crews.

Any personal property remaining is held at an ODOT facility for at least 30 days. Trash is discarded. Information to retrieve property is posted at the camp location.

For general questions:

AskODOT

(888) 275-6368

Ask.ODOT@odot.state.or.us

State laws and legal agreements guide ODOT's role

State laws and binding legal agreements guide ODOT in how we manage personal belongings from camps found along state highways.

Notices are posted before personal property is removed. Notification can vary based on the location and safety.

By law we're required to post notices before removing personal property. The agreements specify what the posted notices must say, how many days the notices are posted in advance of restoration work, and how personal property is cataloged and stored.

ODOT and our contractors or law enforcement officers may ask campers to collect their belongings and leave the area. ODOT is not a law enforcement agency. We have no authority to force campers to leave.

Law enforcement agencies often accompany ODOT and our contractors may provide support. They have the legal authority to clear public property.

People who feel threatened or believe prohibited activities are occurring along state highways should contact law enforcement.

Portland

Under an intergovernmental agreement with Portland, the city manages camping on ODOT property within city limits. More information on the agreement is on the city's website and concerns in that area should be reported online at <https://pdxreporter.org>.

