



December 6, 2013

R3-49-13

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Drivers in Southwest Oregon face icy conditions

Travel strongly discouraged due to snow and freezing temperatures

MEDFORD – With the coldest air since 1998 settling across the region, Assistant District Manager Jeremiah Griffin drove from his White City office to check conditions on the Siskiyou Pass. Drumming his fingers on the steering wheel, he pointed out driver after driver.

“She’s going too fast. That one is going too fast as well. These folks are just driving too fast for the conditions,” said Griffin. “They need to slow down or stay home.”

ODOT maintenance crews have been out in full force, working to keep state highways open Friday as a winter storm moved north to south across the state, blanketing the valley and snarling traffic along Interstate 5. Several inches of snow fell in the Rogue Valley this afternoon.

Chain restrictions are currently in effect on most I-5 passes in southwest Oregon. Call 511 or go online to TripCheck.com for the latest road conditions.

“We’ve got all de-icer trucks and snowplows working but so much is coming at us at once that drivers will hit some rough patches before we get there first,” Griffin said.

ODOT reminds motorists that bridges freeze before roads, so it is important to leave extra room between yourself and other vehicles.

“While we are really concerned about fighting the snow right now, we’re equally concerned about what we might encounter tomorrow,” Griffin said. “With freezing temperatures predicted tonight, we’re liable to wake up Saturday morning to a sheet of ice that stretches from the Oregon coast to Crater Lake.”

Slow Down

- Allow extra time — road conditions are such that travel will be slower than usual.
- Don’t tailgate! Give yourself extra stopping distance in case you hit ice.
- Brake gently to avoid skidding or sliding. If the wheels lock up, ease off the brakes.
- Check TripCheck.com or call 511 to check highway conditions. Prepare your vehicle and plan your trip accordingly. If you don’t need to travel, stay home.
- Review our winter driving tips online here: www.oregon.gov/odot.