

Traffic Stops at the Eisenhower/Johnson Memorial Tunnels

Frequently Asked Questions

- **Why does the Colorado Department of Transportation stop traffic at the Eisenhower/Johnson Tunnel?**

The primary reason is the safety of the traveling public. CDOT holds or “meters” traffic at the tunnel when vehicle volumes exceed the capacity of the Interstate 70 corridor. Accidents, adverse weather or other problems along the corridor also can cause traffic to back up into the tunnel. When back-ups occur within the tunnel, CDOT stops vehicles from entering the tunnel, allowing traffic queues to clear, before releasing more traffic into the tunnel.

- **How long are the stops when CDOT’s metering traffic?**

Stops usually average about 20 minutes because that’s about how long it takes to clear the queue. However, the stops can be shorter or longer in duration – as traffic and conditions dictate. Even though traffic is stopped for a period of time, it quickly catches up to the slower moving vehicles ahead.

- **Why is it critical to maintain traffic flow through the tunnel?**

Inside the tunnel, there are only two lanes, no pull-outs or shoulders, and vehicles are wedged together tightly. That is why CDOT does not allow traffic to backup in the tunnel to the point where crews would not be able to respond to a medical emergency, accident, fire, or other problem, in a timely manner.

- **When does metering usually take place?**

Eastbound metering occurs primarily on weekends, usually on Sunday afternoons, when heavy traffic can slow the flow of vehicles to a crawl, creating gridlock conditions. Heavier than usual traffic can be expected from January to March, due to additional skier traffic, and in July and August, when summer tourist and recreational traffic traditionally is at its peak. However, tunnel metering can take place on eastbound and/or westbound I-70 at any time due to accidents or for avalanche control work during daylight hours in the winter.

- **When CDOT stops traffic at the tunnel, doesn't it slow down all eastbound traffic?**

It actually doesn't slow traffic down – it allows it to flow more efficiently. CDOT traffic engineers have studied the time differential when metering is taking place and, while traffic may initially be stopped for 20 minutes, the actual delay is about 3 ½ minutes. That's because eastbound traffic is moving more slowly and the released vehicles eventually catch-up with traffic further east down the corridor.

- **Is tunnel metering a new traffic control measure?**

No. Vehicle metering has been taking place at the tunnel for nearly 20 years.

- **Are there any other reasons traffic is stopped at the Eisenhower/Johnson Tunnel?**

Yes. Trucks carrying hazardous materials are not allowed to travel through the tunnel and must use Loveland Pass (U.S. 6). But during the winter, adverse weather frequently closes the pass, requiring hazmat vehicles to travel through the tunnel. Due to safety concerns, CDOT does not allow hazmat to travel through the tunnel with other vehicles. Therefore, usually at the top the hour, CDOT escorts waiting hazmat loads through the tunnel. These closures last about 15 minutes.

- **How can I find out when metering is taking place?**

Information is available by calling 511, by looking on the left side of this Web page under "Travel Info" and then under "Alerts & Restrictions" or by checking www.cotrip.org. CDOT also notifies the traveling public via the electronic message signs that are on I-70, and any available electronic signs on U.S. 6 and State Highway 9 in Summit County.