

US 36 Flood Recovery Repairs

What is the current status of US 36 between Lyons and Estes Park?

Despite repairs made by the National Guard to temporarily reopen US 36, the roadway is still at risk of losing existing embankment and roadway. The highway is currently in a temporary state and the upcoming spring runoff further threatens the safety and integrity of the highway. This is already evident at mile marker 7.7, where the embankment is failing and one lane of the highway is currently closed until repairs can be made.

US 36 has been identified as the first mountain corridor to begin and complete remaining emergency and permanent repairs following the September 2013 floods. As a critical route into Estes Park for residents and tourists, this corridor's repairs have been targeted to be expedited for several reasons:

1. The alignment along US 36 provides the opportunity to consider options that keep the roadway away from the river more frequently than other mountain highways.
2. A partnership with Central Federal Lands will help add expertise to work on this corridor.
3. US 36 will serve as a primary detour route during permanent repairs to SH 7 and US 34. By moving forward on the US 36 emergency repairs, CDOT can stagger the work being performed on mountain corridors impacted by the flooding, thereby lessening impacts to the communities and always maintaining access to the town of Estes Park.
4. Traffic counts prior to the tourist season (beginning in May) are much lower and performing work during the winter months will help reduce the impact of repairs.

What will be done for US 36 emergency repairs?

Recognizing the unique nature of this corridor, Federal Highway Administration – Central Federal Lands Highway Division (CFLHD) and the Colorado Department of Transportation (CDOT) are combining their expertise and resources to design and construct final repairs to US 36. The overall intent is to stabilize areas of roadway which failed during flooding and to “armor” banks of the river channel, reducing possibility of future river impacts to the highway.

This approach includes shifting the roadway away from the river channel between five and 50 feet (an average of 20 feet) by removing portion of existing mountainside (approximately 210,000 cubic yards). A portion of rock generated from blasting portions of the mountain will be used to stabilize the slopes near the river to reduce effects of future runoff and flooding. Leftover materials will be donated to local agencies, towns, and counties to help with their repair efforts.

Once complete the improved stretches of roadway will have been moved further away from the river an average of 20 feet. There will be 12 foot lanes with 6 foot shoulders within the repaired segments of roadway. Currently, there are 12 feet lanes with 2 foot shoulders. Not only will the additional shoulders help widen the highway, but the shoulders will also help improve safety by providing space for emergency pull-offs. Furthermore, by softening some of the mountain curves, sight distance will be improved along several of the more severe curves on US 36, including Dead Man's Curve.

During this period, CDOT will continue to work with local entities, state agencies such as the Department of Natural Resources and others to assess the overall vision for the US 36 corridor, looking at recreational access, the river itself, multi-modal and other improvements.

What will it take to accomplish this type of work?

The work will require two phases of work:

- Phase 1 (January 2014 through mid-May 2014) - Emergency work to maintain and stabilize the roadway prior to and during spring runoff
- Phase 2 (Mid-May 2014 through fall 2014) – Construct the remaining necessary embankment, road base, asphalt, signing/stripping and safety features to repair the highway on a long-term basis

This aggressive schedule will help reinforce the resiliency of the highway corridor and improve safety. Ultimately it will also help to decrease total delays to the traveling public over the life of the project, as this will be the first flooded area to receive such significant repairs. Additionally, by moving forward immediately on repairs, the overall cost of the project will be reduced.

What will happen during construction?

Because it is critical to complete Phase 1 prior to spring runoff, work will occur seven days a week with night work. The primary work includes blasting activities to remove a portion of the nearby mountainside and to reroute the road away from the river. Specifically:

- Blasting activities will occur during daylight hours Monday through Friday (*nighttime blasting is not a preferred option due to significant safety concerns*)
- Blasting schedules and extended closures will be provided seven days in advance
- Local access for residents will be coordinated through the project team
- Blasting closures will be less than two miles in length to allow access to communities from both sides of the work
- Full closures will be limited to *either* the east or west end of the project limits
- The blasting areas will be kept secure and viewing of the blasting will not be permitted.
- **US 34 and SH 7** will serve as the **recommended alternate routes** for commuter/tourist traffic during blasting closures

Throughout construction, CDOT and CFL will continue to work closely with residents and businesses to address issues. The contractor will also work with emergency service providers to ensure safe passage through the work zone throughout construction

During Phase 2 (April 2014 through fall 2014), crews will construct the remaining necessary embankment, road base, asphalt, signing/stripping and safety features to repair the highway on a long-term basis. Due to the increase of vehicles traveling on US 36 during the summer, traffic will be maintained during the day. Construction schedules on US 34 and SH 7 will be coordinated appropriately with any potential closures on US 36. Delays can be expected due to necessary lane reductions. Additionally, there may be occasional full road closures overnight.

When will crews be working and how will that impact me?

- “Delays” referenced below should be defined as the amount of time public traffic may be stopped prior to proceeding through the construction zone(s).
- It is anticipated that crews will be working 24 hours a day and 7 days a week through the emergency phase. One hour delays should be expected Mondays through Fridays from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. Crews will minimize delays to motorists through the work zone daily from 6 a.m. to 8 a.m. and 4 p.m. to 6 p.m. to accommodate commutes.

- As part of the blasting schedule, there will be 20 different three hour closures, 10 different two hour closures, all of which will be publicized a week in advance to help motorists plan their schedules.
- Night and weekend work is expected with 30 minute delays.
 - During night work, there will be 10 different full closures of US 36 from 10 p.m. to 5 a.m., all of which will be publicized a week in advance.
- Bicyclists will be prohibited during the construction period beginning Monday, January 13 until mid-May 2014.
- Recreational access points within in the work zone will be closed until mid-May 2014.

How will information be communicated?

CDOT will coordinate closely with local representatives to share construction updates and the blasting schedule. In addition to public meetings to discuss upcoming work, CDOT will maintain a project hotline and website that will include weekly look ahead schedules so that the public can plan their travel. Permanent design reviews will be coordinated by mid-January.

Project Hotline: 970-591-0001

Project Email: US36FloodRepairs@PublicInfoTeam.com

Project Website: <http://www.coloradodot.info/projects/floodrelatedprojects/us-36-lyons-to-estes>

(click on green cell phone icon on the right side of the page to sign up for email updates)

General Flood Repairs Website: www.coloradodot.info/projects/floodrelatedprojects

