



# **COLORADO**

## **Department of Transportation**

### **How to prepare for traveling on Interstate 70 in Glenwood Canyon**

*July 2021 - Fall 2021*

*Updated July 1*

#### **What should motorists expect on I-70 in Glenwood Canyon?**

Motorists traveling on Interstate 70 should prepare for reduced speeds, slick roads and limited visibility in Glenwood Canyon, as well as other inclement weather conditions that are common along the I-70 mountain corridor. Vehicle crashes are common, which can cause extensive delays or closures for motorists. If there is rain in the forecast, motorists should anticipate a possible safety closure of I-70, rest areas and the Glenwood Canyon recreation path. These safety closures are to protect the traveling public from the potential for debris flow, mudslides or rockfall. Construction impacts will be much lighter on I-70 in Glenwood Canyon compared to Summer 2020. To ensure safety, motorists should plan for occasional lane closures, obey reduced speeds and drive with caution. CDOT also urges travelers to stay focused on the road and avoid distracted driving.

#### **What can motorists do to plan ahead?**

Motorists planning to travel on I-70, visit rest areas or use the recreation path in Glenwood Canyon should pay close attention to road conditions on [cotrip.org](https://www.cotrip.org) and weather forecasts. If there is a significant vehicle crash, there may be extensive delays or a closure. If there is moderate, heavy or extreme rain in Glenwood Canyon over the Grizzly Creek Fire burn scar, it is very likely there will be a debris flow, mudslides and rockfall. To protect motorists from these and other hazards, CDOT has a safety closure protocol in place for I-70, rest areas and recreation path. CDOT recommends that travelers have a back up plan in the event that closures are necessary. Motorists should be familiar with the recommended alternate route (more information below) and should check [www.cotrip.org](https://www.cotrip.org) for the latest road conditions and route options. CDOT also recommends that travelers bring an emergency kit with water, snacks, a flashlight and a blanket, as mountain conditions often change suddenly.

#### **I heard the rest areas and recreation path might close before I-70 if there's rain in the forecast. Why?**

Safety closures of the rest areas and recreation path in Glenwood Canyon are necessary to prepare for a possible evacuation of I-70. CDOT will close the rest areas and path if any of the following take place:

- If a certain amount of rain has fallen on the Grizzly Creek burn scar, which is located above I-70, rest areas and the path.
- If the forecast shows a minimum threshold for a Flash Flood Watch taking place in the next 24 hours.
- If a Flash Flood Watch or Flash Flood Warning are in place.

The rest areas and path will continue to be closed until the forecast improves. In some cases this will mean they are closed overnight before a rain event. Which rest areas are closed may depend on weather conditions. Rest areas include: No Name (Exit 119), Grizzly Creek (Exit 121), Hanging Lake (Exit 125) and Bair Ranch (Exit 129). The Hanging Lake Rest Area (Exit 125) is only open to motorists with permits for the Hanging Lake trail.

### **When will there be safety closures of I-70 in Glenwood Canyon?**

Safety closures may be necessary due to vehicle crashes, debris flow or other events. If there is a Flash Flood Watch for the Grizzly Creek burn scar, CDOT will have personnel and equipment on standby in preparation for a closure. The rest areas and the recreation path will be closed and evacuated, unless that has already taken place. **If there is a Flash Flood Warning for the Grizzly Creek burn scar, CDOT will close I-70 in Glenwood Canyon from Exit 116 (Glenwood Springs) to Exit 133 (Dotsero). There will also be closure points at Exit 109 (South Canyon) and Exit 87 (West Rifle), depending on the incident.** All traffic in Glenwood Canyon will immediately be evacuated from I-70. The rest areas and path will be closed and evacuated, unless that has already taken place. CDOT, Colorado State Patrol and local agencies will assist with evacuating the canyon as quickly as possible. Having additional closure points further west will allow CDOT, CSP and partner agencies to manage a closure safely, allowing emergency vehicles to pass through closure points and without requiring motorists to wait on I-70 for an extended period of time. Local eastbound traffic may be allowed east of Exit 109, conditions depending. Safety closures may be required due to vehicle crashes. The safety closure protocol described above will also be used for a closure due to a crash.

### **What happens during a safety closure of I-70 in Glenwood Canyon?**

During a canyon closure due to a rain event, CDOT will monitor I-70 for debris flow, mudslides and rockfall. Personnel and equipment will be ready to clear the road of debris and assess damage before reopening. Motorists that are passing through the area should plan on being directed back to I-70 in the opposite direction, in an effort to prevent traffic jams in neighboring communities in Eagle County and the Roaring Fork Valley. A closure may be put into place during a major vehicle crash in Glenwood Canyon or on I-70 nearby. If a safety closure of I-70 is anticipated to last longer than one hour, CDOT recommends that motorists travel to their destination using an alternate route. Please see below for the recommended alternate route. CDOT will reopen I-70 in Glenwood Canyon once it is safe for the traveling public.

### **What alternate route should I take during an I-70 closure in Glenwood Canyon?**

If a safety closure of I-70 in Glenwood Canyon is anticipated to last longer than one hour, CDOT recommends a northern alternate route using Colorado Highway 9, US Highway 40 and Colorado Highway 13. CDOT will recommend the alternate route when a closure may last for a longer period or time, and to ensure emergency services can respond quickly to incidents on

the I-70 corridor, and to prevent motorists from waiting on I-70 for several hours at a time. The alternate route will require approximately 2.5 hours additional travel time to reach your destination, compared to traveling on I-70 through Glenwood Canyon. By traveling on the recommended alternate route, motorists can avoid major delays caused by rough roads and other hazards.

- **WESTBOUND I-70:** Motorists coming from the Denver metro area or Interstate 25 can travel westbound on I-70 to Silverthorne, then turn north onto CO 9. In Kremmling, travelers should turn onto westbound US Highway 40 towards Steamboat Springs. After reaching Craig, motorists can return south via CO 13 towards Rifle. Access to I-70 westbound is at Rifle.
- **EASTBOUND I-70:** Motorists traveling eastbound from Utah or Grand Junction can reach the Denver Metro area by traveling the route above in reverse.

Before detouring onto any alternate route, motorists should refer to [www.cotrip.org](http://www.cotrip.org) for the latest road conditions.

### **What alternate routes should I avoid during an I-70 closure of Glenwood Canyon?**

CDOT strongly discourages travelers from using highways south of I-70 for an alternate route, due to extensive construction closures. CDOT also asks that motorists not use Cottonwood Pass Road (in Eagle/Garfield counties), Hagerman Pass, Eagle/Thomasville Road or other county or forest service roads in Eagle, Garfield and Pitkin counties as a detour. These roads are not built for heavy traffic or commercial oversize vehicles. Many of these four-wheel drive roads also do not have cell phone coverage.

### **What about Hanging Lake trail?**

The City of Glenwood Springs and U.S. Forest Service have reopened the Hanging Lake trail to permitted hikers. More information is available at <https://visitglenwood.com/hanglinglake>. The Hanging Lake Rest Area (Exit 125) is only open to motorists with hiking permits.

*Real time road updates and conditions are available 24-7 at [www.cotrip.org](http://www.cotrip.org). For more information, please contact the CDOT Customer Service Hotline at 970-243-2368 or <https://www.codot.gov/topcontent/contact-cdot>. The hotline is available Monday - Friday, 7:30am - 4:30pm. In the event of an emergency, please call 911.*