

# Rocky Mountain News

## CDOT rolls out its I-70 winter plan

### Chain-up areas, tow trucks aim to keep semis going

By **Kevin Flynn**, Rocky Mountain News ([Contact](#))

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Photo by Ken Papaleo / The Rocky

Driver Ron Wand, of Tomahawk Transport Inc., puts chains on his big tires to go over Loveland Pass on Wednesday morning. Truckers using Interstate 70 will see an expansion of chain-up areas and the addition of night lighting in some of them.

It's the rematch of winter vs. I-70 again this year, with CDOT as the referee.

The state's plow-pushers and ice-melters are gearing up for the battle with new measures aimed at troublesome truck traffic.

Tony DeVito, transportation director for the CDOT region that covers Interstate 70 from

Golden to Vail Pass, said keeping trucks moving during snowstorms is a key to keeping the entire road open.

"Keeping I-70 open is a priority for us," DeVito said as CDOT rolled out its winter plowing and construction plans Wednesday, even as an early-season storm dropped inches of fresh snow in the high country.

While CDOT has added trucker chain-up areas along I-70 over the past few years, DeVito said, the state will improve the safety of those roadside spots with new lighting and lower speed limits.

The improvements will be phased in during the season. For instance, by Thanksgiving, CDOT expects to have certified vendors along the highway who can assist drivers who need to buy, install or remove tire chains.

And on holidays and weekends, CDOT has hired three heavy tow-truck units to stage at known trouble spots where trucks often jackknife or slide, including Floyd Hill, Bakerville, Eisenhower Tunnel and Vail Pass.

Last year, CDOT added 137 truck parking spaces at its chain-up areas, for a total of 322 spaces, spread among 26 roadside chain-up areas. Twenty-one of them are on I-70's mountain corridor.

Some will receive night lighting for safety, and CDOT plans to install lighted speed-limit signs near them, so that when the chain law is invoked

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during storms, a lower speed limit can be posted for traffic passing the truckers' roadside work areas.

CDOT also is hiring a courtesy patrol for holiday and weekend duty to assist stranded motorists. The object is to get stalled vehicles out of traffic and reopen the highway as quickly as possible.

Trucks slowing in the snow or blocking lanes after skidding are among the biggest causes of I-70 congestion. aside from the sheer volume of cars, trucks and buses snaking across the Rockies between Denver and the ski slopes.

When the chain law was invoked Tuesday night, DeVito said CDOT crews at a truck stop west of Vail noted 90 percent of the truckers were in compliance.

"It's the ones from southern California and the southern states who seem to be unaware of our chain law," he said.

*flynnk@RockyMountainNews.com or 303-954-5247*

### The week's forecast

Metro-area residents will wake up to freezing temperatures today and see a high of about 52 this afternoon.

The sun returns for the weekend, with highs of 64 on Friday, 69 on Saturday and 65 on Sunday. "It still looks like Saturday is going to be the nicest day of the week, near 70," said National

Weather Service meteorologist Jim Kalina.

Nicer weather should continue into next week with highs in the upper 60s on Monday and Tuesday.

The eastern plains will be windier and colder than Denver, with an expected high of 46 in Limon today.

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