

# ODOT Funding Package Resource Library

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## Emergency Response

When emergencies occur around the state, ODOT is there to help keep people safe and traffic moving. Emergency Response is composed of three tasks: Emergency Operations, Emergency Traffic Control and Emergency Repair. ODOT's Emergency Operations program ensures the agency is prepared for and ready to respond to emergencies affecting the Oregon's transportation system and ODOT's business functions. Emergency Traffic Control is the assistance ODOT provides during an event or evacuation to direct traffic, primarily in response to fires or major snowstorms. Emergency Repair Activities are reactive in nature and encompass response to events like landslides, rockfalls, sinks, and settlements.

### Emergency Preparedness

ODOT's Emergency Operations program is responsible for training staff, establishing disaster response procedures, conducting practice exercises, participating in Oregon Department of Emergency Management planning and managing operations during emergency events. When an emergency occurs, the team works to secure emergency funding, provide regular reports to the Governor's office, and coordinate with other responding state agencies. One example of inter-agency coordination is ODOT's work with the Public Utilities Commission (PUC). Landslides and fires will often impact utility lines. PUC ensures that the owners of those lines are on the ground with ODOT crews because they need to use our road to reestablish connectivity, and we need their lines cleared for traveler safety.

### Emergency Traffic Control

Emergency Traffic Control is one of ODOT's most visible roles in Emergency Response. This is distinct from ODOT's role in Incident Response, because Emergency Traffic Control is used when the emergency is beyond the highway. For example, in wildfire situations other agencies are managing firefighting operations and ODOT is responsible for closing highways and/or providing other traffic control on the highways due to unsafe conditions from the fire itself. We maintain agreements with firefighting agencies, such as the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) and the US Forest Service, that document these roles and responsibilities.

### Emergency Response Spotlight

#### *Durkee Fire, July 2024*

One recent example of ODOT's Emergency Traffic Control role was the Durkee Fire in 2024, which burned nearly 300,000 acres in eastern Oregon. Due to fire, dense smoke and compromised utility lines, leading to ODOT closing I-84 intermittently for more than 60 hours over 4 days. Closing an interstate highway is a lot of work – this series of closures required 55 ODOT employees working a

total of nearly 1500 hours. The cost of ODOT traffic control alone was \$121,000. The emergency response also included many indirect costs, such as the planned work that did not get done and anticipated future maintenance due to erosion and slope instability along the highways in burned areas.

### *Arizona Inn Landslide, January 2023*

Landslides and rockfalls are other types of emergencies that ODOT maintenance responds to and manages. These often occur over many years and are difficult to completely mitigate and resolve. In the case of the Arizona Inn Landslide on US 101 south of Port Orford, the hillside has been prone to movement since the highway was first constructed in the 1930s, with major failures occurring roughly every 20 years. The most recent failure occurred in January 2023 when a 200-yard segment of highway dropped up to 12 feet vertically, requiring a full highway closure. Four days after the initial closure, a contractor for ODOT was able to construct a temporary single lane across the landslide, significantly reducing the 4.5-hour detour caused by the closure. Design of a permanent repair is underway with estimated costs now exceeding \$50 million.

### Funding Emergency Response

As the climate gets more extreme and as vehicles get larger, the state's roadway faces more intense and frequent emergencies, leading to ever more expensive repairs. These emergencies include localized events, such as the vehicle that recently hit the bridge rail on US101 at Necarney Creek, collapsing the sidewalk and causing an extended closure to repair the structure. Sometimes these repairs are conducted by state maintenance forces but are typically contracted. The emergencies also include large scale disasters impacting wide areas of the state such as the 2020 wildfire fires. In these cases, widespread repairs are needed and can include repaired pavement and structures and replacing guardrails and signs. This work is typically completed by contractors. The financial impacts of this range of emergencies are significant.

For localized events, when the perpetrator of the damage is known, we pursue reimbursement to recoup costs. When the responsible party is unknown, repairs are paid for through the maintenance budget, which comes out of the State Highway Fund. For large-scale emergencies, we typically apply for federal reimbursement, but the repairs need to start before that money is received. As a result, ODOT pays for the work up-front and may wait years for full repayment.

### *Federal Funding*

There are two Federal programs that provide funding for eligible highway repairs to state or local roads when disasters strike. The programs are the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) Federal-Aid Emergency Relief (ER) program and the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) Public Assistance program. Access to these funds requires an emergency declaration from local governing bodies, the Governor, or the President. In the last year, Oregon received two FHWA ER declarations, repairing over 80 damaged sites which included close to \$40 million in reimbursable repairs.