

Update: Highway 101 reopened after incident that stranded motorists south of Crescent City for hours

June 6, 2020



This is an update. The original story reported that U.S. Highway 101 between Crescent City and Klamath was closed Saturday afternoon. The highway reopened around 2:30- a.m. Further information about the incident will be reported when it becomes available.

At around 10 p.m. Saturday California's Office of Emergency Services allowed hotels and motels to rent rooms to travelers stuck in an hours-long closure of U.S. Highway 101 south of Crescent City, according to the Del Norte County Office of Emergency Services.

Due to COVID-19 restrictions, California lodging establishments have been allowed to providing rooms only to essential workers.

However, a number of travelers and area residents became stranded late Saturday afternoon, June 6, when the California Highway Patrol closed the highway between mile markers 14 and 22 in Del Norte County.

The North Coast Journal reported that at about 3:40 p.m. Saturday, law enforcement officials attempted to stop a vehicle with a man holding a firearm to his head and threatening to shoot himself.

Around 4:30 p.m., the California Highway Patrol's Crescent City office posted a notice to Facebook asking people to avoid the area south of Crescent City and north of Klamath due to police activity and said traffic in both directions had been stopped.

According to the North Coast Journal, officers were successful in laying down spike strips and puncturing the man's tires.

Shortly before 8 p.m., the CHP provided an update, advising that there was no estimated time for reopening the highway and no detour around the closure.

"We are currently negotiating with an armed subject for a peaceful resolution," the agency said in a Facebook post. "We will update as soon as the highway is reopened."

The actual number of vehicles stuck on either side of the highway closure is not known at this time.

"It's actually quite dangerous on the Crescent City side," one man posted at around 10:40 p.m. "Cars parked along road, locals speeding around, people wandering around to find a place to take a leak... someone could get hit by a car. Or fender bender or worse. Not safe. Bummer situation all the way around."

As traffic backed up, the Del Norte County Sheriff's Office moved the closure on the north end to Highway 101 and Humboldt Road.

In addition to announcing that stranded motorists would be allowed to rent rooms, the Del Norte County Office of Emergency Services announced around 11 p.m. that it was working with the Red Cross and Yurok Office of Emergency Services to provide blankets and other supplies to motorists stranded on the hill between South Beach and Klamath due to the ongoing law enforcement incident.

"By order of Public Health and OES hotels can allow emergency rental of rooms to stranded motorists in Del Norte County who are trapped on either side of the Hwy 101 shutdown," DNOES said. "Yurok OES will open their hotel to stranded motorists as well. People stuck in Klamath can wait in the hotel parking lot until assistance arrives."