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News Release

Flooding detours I-35 traffic to U.S. 77; U.S. 166 also now closed

Walnut River at Arkansas City tops road Thursday; Madison still unaffected

ARKANSAS CITY, Kan. (May 9, 2019) — Heavy rains over the past four days have created a flooding situation that has resulted in numerous impacts locally as interstate traffic is diverted through Ark City.

Flooding of Slate Creek forced the closure Tuesday of the Kansas Turnpike between South Haven and Wellington, with all traffic on I-35 being diverted through Cowley County on U.S. 160 and U.S. 77.

This has led to an unusually volume of traffic on the U.S. 77 bypass in Arkansas City. Citizens who do not need to travel are encouraged to remain at home and avoid the bypass due to the congestion.

This interstate detouring may continue indefinitely, due to apparent damage to the turnpike roadway.

Meanwhile, U.S. 166 eastbound out of Ark City was closed early Thursday morning as the Walnut River crested at 28.4 feet. At 26 feet, water begins to flow across the westbound lane of U.S. 166, east of the roundabout. Chestnut Avenue also is closed east of town, but Madison Avenue remains open.

Rumors of a boil advisory or other disruption to the water supply system in Arkansas City are inaccurate. The water wells west of the Arkansas River are currently unaffected by the flooding.

Also, U.S. 77 was closed Wednesday to through traffic north of Winfield, due to the high water.

All northbound traffic entering Winfield from the south is being detoured west on U.S. 160 (Ninth Avenue) to 21st Road and then north to Udall. Traffic can reach the Kansas Turnpike by continuing west on U.S. 160 to the Wellington exchange. U.S. 160 west of Winfield is currently unaffected by flooding.

U.S. 77 south of Ark City is not currently at risk of being closed, as the Arkansas River has crested at 20.9 feet. No mass evacuations are in effect or anticipated in Cowley County.

The Arkansas City Fire-EMS Department did perform an emergency evacuation Wednesday from a house located at 5895 286th Road, due to rising flood waters west of Arkansas City.

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Using its swift water rescue boat, ACFD was able to rescue four individuals from the residence. One resident refused to be evacuated.

“I want to remind citizens that rising floodwaters can trap individuals before they know it, which will require a dangerous water rescue operation to be performed,” said Ark City Fire Chief Bobby Wolfe.

“If people refuse to evacuate, we may not have another chance at a later time. It is best to get out early. And while driving, when you come across water flowing over the roadway, remember to ‘Turn around, Don’t Drown.’”

Additional news releases will be provided as conditions change.

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