



Commonwealth of Kentucky Kentucky Transportation Cabinet

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Transportation Cabinet issues official order for drivers transporting hazardous materials

East End Tunnel travel temporarily restricted in Jefferson County to allow for water system repairs

FRANKFORT, Ky. (Jan. 12, 2018) – Kentucky Transportation Cabinet (KYTC) Secretary Greg Thomas has issued an official order temporarily restricting the travel of placarded vehicles carrying hazardous materials to allow for water system repairs in the East End Tunnel. Effective Monday, Jan. 15, at 9 a.m. EST, those vehicles will be restricted from traveling on KY 841 North (Gene Synder Freeway) in Jefferson County from mile marker 36.5 (U.S. 42 exit ramp) to mile marker 38.8 (Kentucky/Indiana state line).

“Out of an abundance of caution, the Cabinet has elected to restrict the travel of hazmat vehicles to allow for repairs to the fire suppression system affected by the recent string of cold weather,” said KYTC State Highway Engineer Andy Barber. “The East End Tunnel continues to be a safe mode of travel for the public.”

Drivers affected by the temporary ban will be notified by the Kentucky Transportation Association and the American Transportation Association. Overhead dynamic message boards will be displayed on Monday in Kentucky and Indiana alerting drivers of the restriction. Detours will be in place in Kentucky rerouting placarded hazmat vehicles on KY 841 North to Interstate 71 South and then to Interstate 65 North to cross the Ohio River in downtown Louisville. An Indiana detour will reroute Interstate 265 South hazmat traffic onto Interstate 65 South at Exit 6 in Clark County. Indiana detours will reroute hazmat vehicles on Interstate 265 onto Interstate 65 South. The left lane of the southbound East End Tunnel will be intermittently closed while repairs are made.

Weather permitting, repairs are expected to begin Monday. A time and cost estimate for the repairs will be dictated once the extent of the damage is determined by contractors during the removal of damaged pipes. Traffic control will be conducted by Kentucky Transportation Cabinet crews. The timeframe for repairs may be delayed should weather events interfere with critical snow and ice removal efforts.

On Friday, Dec. 29, a false fire alarm in the tunnel was sounded, which alerted the fire alarm control panel. TRIMARC operators verified no fire existed in the tunnel and aborted the timed notification to emergency response teams. The East End Tunnel's fire suppression system is controlled by Supervisory Control and Data Acquisition (SCADA) software. As a safeguard, whenever the fire alarm control panel receives an alarm, SCADA automatically shuts off the recirculation system's water pump, but without a notification, the system appeared to operate normally based on water temperature readings. On Wednesday, Jan. 3, KYTC personnel detected visible damage to the fire suppression system due to recent frigid temperatures that caused water pipes to burst. The KYTC immediately notified the Harrods Creek Fire Department to discuss the course of action and to determine plans in the event of future emergencies. Restricting flammable hazmat loads from the tunnel is a recommendation in the pre-existing emergency response plan to mitigate risks. The tunnel's fire suppression system is designed to release a mixture of fire-department grade AAF foam and water if a fire is detected, unless TRIMARC operators override the action within seconds.

"The determination to continue to allow traffic through the East End Tunnel was made once we had assurance that emergency service providers could respond in the event of a fire emergency caused by a traffic incident," said KYTC District 5 Chief District Engineer Matt Bullock. "The fire suppression system is one facet of the response efforts we have in place to address possible tunnel fires. Restricting traffic is simply a precaution."

Kentucky State Police's Commercial Vehicle Enforcement officers and Louisville Metro Police Department officers will begin enforcement on Monday. Indiana State Police will assist with enforcement. Hazmat vehicles are detectable, as they feature placarded labels such as "flammable gas."

Since the opening of the tunnel in December 2016, there have been no incidents involving hazmat vehicles. The Cabinet will be requesting a SCADA feature improvement that notifies operators when the system is automatically shut off.

The official order will expire once repairs are complete. It can be found [here](#).

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