



NEWS RELEASE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

I-5 CLOSED AT SR-14 DUE TO MULTIPLE VEHICLE ACCIDENT

LOS ANGELES – Emergency crews continue to inch their way into the Newhall Pass tunnel as they work to clear a multi-vehicle accident that occurred last night on the southbound Golden State Freeway (I-5) truck bypass.

I-5 currently is closed on the northbound side at SR-14 and southbound at Calgrove Boulevard.

Following the collision, a massive fire was ignited in the tunnel, trapping several vehicles. The fire is still burning in some spots in the interior, making it impossible for crews to enter.

At this time, as many as six big rig trucks and six passenger vehicles are believed to be in the tunnel still. Due to the intensity of the fire, some vehicles might have burned to the core, according to the Los Angeles County Fire Department.

Two fatalities have been confirmed, and 10 injured have been taken to local hospitals. The crews still cannot enter the tunnel due to exposed rebar (reinforced steel bars), which is important to the tunnel's structural integrity. They are, however, continuing to move wreckage out of the area, a couple of feet at a time as it is safe.

The tunnel is a 550 ft- long reinforced concrete boxed girder, built in 1975. It was last inspected in April 2007, and no problems were found. However, funding has been authorized for emergency repairs should they be needed.

"We need to proceed methodically," said Caltrans Director Will Kempton, to ensure the safety of all involved. "At the same time, we recognize that I-5 is the major north/south route and it is vital to open it as soon as it's safely possible." As soon as the tunnel is cleared, crews will begin shoring under it, he added.





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Kempton said that Governor Schwarzenegger is closely monitoring the situation to ensure that all the necessary resources are available.

Caltrans is working to open the southbound lanes by the Tuesday morning commute. It is not known at this time when the northbound lanes will be opened.

I-5 Detours at the Newhall Pass area are as follows:

Northbound Detour:

For those proceeding to northern California on I-5, transition to northbound SR-14; proceed to westbound SR-138 (Avenue D). This will connect back to northbound I-5.

Southbound Detour:

From southbound I-5, exit at Calgrove Boulevard; continue south on Calgrove Boulevard to The Old Road, which becomes San Fernando Road; continue on San Fernando Road to Sepulveda Boulevard; continue south on Sepulveda Boulevard to the southbound I-5 on-ramp at Roxford Street.

Updates will be provided as they become available.

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