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## CDOT Warns Backcountry Users About Unattended Vehicles

*Skiers, Snowshoers, Snowmobilers*

*Should Use Extreme Caution When Leaving Vehicles on Side of Road*



**STATEWIDE** – With the approaching storm and hopes of snow piling high in the mountains of Colorado, backcountry users are sure to start planning their next outdoor adventure - packing up skis and snowshoes into the car or loading the snowmobiles onto trailers. Meanwhile, for CDOT (the Colorado Department of Transformation), the accumulating snow means deploying snowplow operators and winter equipment to clear the highways and keep the roads safe for travelers.

CDOT encourages and welcomes the public to use and enjoy Colorado's backcountry safely, but reminds outdoor enthusiasts to do so safely.

“Always obey road closures set in place for avalanche control mitigation and wait until authorities open the highway to ensure snow slide operations have been completed and roads cleared,” said **Paul Wilson**, CDOT maintenance foreman who supervises operations for US Highway (US) 550 Red Mountain, Molas and Coal Bank passes of the southern San Juan Mountains. “Backcountry users should NEVER leave vehicles near or adjacent to snow slide areas, which are always well marked with signs.”

CDOT advises those who use the backcountry to be careful when parking and leaving vehicles along the roadway. Anyone leaving a vehicle unattended on the side of the road, runs the risk of breaking the law and having their vehicle towed away by law enforcement. Backcountry users should park only in clearly marked and designated parking areas, typically found at the summit of mountain passes and at some trail heads.

Some areas along the highway may provide ample room to park several feet away and off the asphalt. But CDOT reminds vehicle owners that they run the risk of being trapped and plowed in with snow pushed by the plow. Vehicles left on the side of the road also make the plowing job difficult for road maintenance crews.

“Our main objective is to clear the roadway as quickly and efficiently as possible so that the highway is made passable and safe for all travelers,” continued Wilson. “Our crews work in all sorts of weather conditions. When visibility is low and a plow comes upon a vehicle parked on the side of the road, there is potential for a collision. The vehicle could be damaged by a passing plow. Plus, this puts our operations behind schedule because of needed repairs or replacement of our own CDOT equipment.”

**OBEY THE LAW:** Backcountry users are also advised that when leaving vehicles on the shoulder of the road, they are at risk of breaking the law, being fined and their vehicle being towed away. Owners who leave vehicles unattended parked on the side of the road are at risk of obstructing the operations of heavy equipment and breaking the law.

#### **2016 Colorado Revised Statutes**

Title 42. Vehicles and Traffic

Article 4. Regulation of Vehicles and Traffic

Part 18. Vehicles Abandoned on Public Property

§ 42-4-1803. Abandonment of motor vehicles - public property

*(2) Whenever any... (law enforcement) ... or agency employee finds a motor vehicle... attended or unattended, standing upon any portion of a highway right-of-way in such a manner as to constitute an obstruction to traffic or proper highway maintenance, such officer or agency employee is authorized to cause the motor vehicle, vehicle, cargo, or debris to be moved to eliminate any such obstruction...*

For more information or to read the Colorado law in its entirety, visit:

<https://law.justia.com/codes/colorado/2016/title-42/regulation-of-vehicles-and-traffic/article-4/part-18/section-42-4-1803/>

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