



Controlled Rock Blasting Frequently Asked Questions

What should motorists expect?

- Beginning Nov. 30, 2022, and continuing during overnight hours for the next several months, both directions of I-17 will be temporarily closed two to three times a week for controlled rock blasting in areas between Anthem Way and Sunset Point. Blasting work will be scheduled during overnight hours, Mondays through Thursdays, as these are the allowable nights for this type of work.
- **Generally, blasting will occur between 10 and 11 p.m. However, the window of time for this work to occur is between 10 p.m. and 4 a.m. The start and end times of each closure could vary based on blast-site, weather and traffic conditions, or other unforeseen circumstances.**
- On weeknights when controlled rock blasting is scheduled, crews will begin narrowing I-17 to a single lane in both directions at 7 p.m., and then fully close the highway after 10 p.m. Drivers should expect delays while crews set up traffic control, and use caution around construction personnel and equipment.
- Motorists planning to travel on I-17 during the overnight hours should leave early or delay travel to avoid the closures entirely. **Motorists who travel between 10 p.m. and 4 a.m. should expect to be impacted by the closures on nights when blasting occurs.**
- Overhead message signs alerting drivers to the upcoming closures will be displayed ahead of the closure areas. These signs will also advise drivers to **reduce speeds** and **prepare for stopped traffic.**
- Schedules are subject to change because of weather or other unforeseen conditions.

What are the safety considerations?

- Safety is the number one priority for the I-17 Improvement Project team. The full closures will not begin until all traffic control is set up in compliance with the approved Traffic Control Plan and all required personnel are in their designated locations. I-17 must be closed in both directions during blasting to keep the traveling public and work crews safe. In addition, workers must be able to complete the controlled rock blasting, then clear the roadway and reopen it to travelers, as quickly, safely and efficiently as possible.
- Emergency vehicles will be able to get through the closure area on the shoulder, except when the blasting is occurring. The project team is coordinating with first responders ahead of controlled rock blasting operations.
- If any potential safety issues are identified, crews would extend the full closure to ensure the matter is resolved. For example, if a “misfire” occurs, crews cannot allow traffic through the blasting area if there are undetonated explosives.
- Crews will check to confirm no vehicles remain in the closure zone before the controlled rock blasting work begins.

Are there alternate routes available?

- Drivers can consult AZ511.gov if they wish to take an alternate route.

What happens if a closure extends longer than planned?

- If crews determine there will be an extended closure, the project team will turn traffic around and detour traffic back north or south so drivers are not stopped indefinitely.
- On nights when blasting work is scheduled, traffic will be stopped before an off-ramp, so crews have the ability to detour traffic in the opposite direction in the event of a closure that lasts more than two hours. If a closure is determined to last that long, crews will guide traffic to use the off-ramps to exit I-17, then use surface roads to get back onto I-17 in the same direction from which they came, so they would head back either north or south.

What is controlled rock blasting?

- Controlled rock blasting is a technique used to loosen the rock along the highway, where construction requires large amounts of material to be moved to accommodate widening. This technique is a common practice for construction throughout the Southwest. Drilling and blasting experts working on the project have extensive experience with blasting operations in Arizona and are highly qualified to ensure that this work is carried out safely and in accordance with all state and federal regulations.
- Approximately 119 controlled rock blasts are necessary in the coming months. That means approximately 119 full closures of I-17 will be necessary between Anthem Way and Sunset Point during the next several months.
- Crews are removing 973,000 cubic yards of rock from alongside I-17 to create additional space for new travel lanes.

Where can motorists find information to stay informed?

- Get real-time traffic conditions at [AZ511.gov](https://www.az511.gov) or by calling 511 (except while driving). You can also download the [AZ511 app](#). Updates about the start of the closures and the reopening of the highway once the blasting and clearing operations are complete will be communicated in real time via AZ511 so drivers know what to expect. Field crews will be coordinating closely with ADOT's Traffic Operations Center.
- To see the dates when controlled rock blasting is scheduled, visit the [Traffic Alerts page](#) on the project website improvingi17.com. Everyone is encouraged to sign up for emailed traffic alerts via the project website so they can plan their trips accordingly.
- Drivers can plan their trips ahead of time by subscribing for traffic alerts at improvingi17.com. Work crews will also provide project information on work zone signage and overhead message boards.