

# Ore. hospitals could reach capacity by mid-December

By Sara Cline  
Associated Press/Report for America

SALEM (AP) — Last week Oregon health officials delivered a concerning message: If the state remains on the path it is now with increasing daily COVID-19 cases, hospitals in Oregon could reach capacity by mid-December.

Out of Oregon's 721 listed intensive-care-unit beds, 24 percent were available, based on data on from the Oregon Health Authority's (OHA) website Thursday. Out of the non-ICU adult hospital beds in the state, 14 percent were available.

As of Thursday afternoon there were 156 confirmed COVID-19 patients in hospitals. However there have been days in months past, such as July and August, where the number has surpassed 165.

In the month of October, Oregon has surpassed its record of daily cases multiple times. On Friday officials reported a new daily record — 600 COVID-19 cases.

So if cases continue to rise and the number of patients in Oregon hospitals begin to spill over what happens?

"Hospitals have a spectrum of tools they can utilize to manage bed capacity such as in the face of a surge of COVID patients," said Tim Heider, a spokesperson for the OHA.

This could include postponing elective procedures, using hospitals beds or wings that are currently unused, or adding staffing capacity to their inpatient units. In addition, Oregon hospitals have worked on a regionalized approach.

"Through this regional approach, hospitals across a region can assess capacity and respond to a surge together by distributing patients needing inpatient or emergency-department level of care based on capacity and capability," Heider said. "In face of a surge, hospitals can call on help from hospitals in neighboring communities to ensure patients get needed care, instead of working in isolation as individual facilities."

This response could include hospitals out of state. Heider said that even prior to COVID-19 hospitals have routinely transferred patients across state lines "to get patients to the appropriate level of care or specialty care."

For six weeks, Oregon's COVID-19 cases were in a downward trend until mid-September. Since then, officials warned that numbers were again increasing at an alarming rate.

## PROXY FALLS: Hike is outside snow gate on Highway 242

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of the lava rocks make it clear that you're on the west side of the mountains.

Lower Proxy Falls is the more photogenic of the two, but the upper falls has an interesting and unusual feature. Each waterfall has its own separate stream cascading from a cliff sheared off by glaciers thousands of years ago. The access trail to the lower falls is quite steep and very rough in places, occasionally requiring some hand-over-hand climbing over rocks and roots.

Upper Proxy Falls drops into a scenic pool, from which

there is no visible outlet; so that stream just vanishes. As is the case in much of the McKenzie region, the lava flows have created porous substrata that redirect surface water to springs that reappear several miles away. The access trail to the upper falls is much easier to traverse than the lower, but the falls here are less impressive.

The exit trail on the back side of the loop is flatter and less obstructed than the scramble through the lava field on the way in, but you would miss the best of the cathedral-like dense forest if you opted to take that route both ways.

There are two snow gates at the west end of the McKenzie Highway; and, at only a little over 3,000 feet elevation, this trailhead is outside the upper

snow gate. This means that, even though the highway over the pass will close with the first significant snowfall, this lower area on the west side will often remain open well into December and can be accessed via Santiam Pass. Later in the season, however, be sure to check local road conditions, as closure dates of the lower snow gate may vary significantly.

To complete our driving loop, we returned over a sunny and snow-free McKenzie Pass. I can't help but be a little saddened each time I see the damage wrought by the Milli Fire on one of Central Oregon's most beautiful areas.

As a matter of interest, the Linton Lake Trailhead is also (just barely) outside the lower snow gate, thereby extending

the hiking season for that pleasant 3.8-mile round-trip hike. Linton Lake was formed in the same glacial valley as Proxy Falls and, like the upper falls, has no visible outlet. If you have the time and inclination, it's a simple matter to do both the Linton Lake and Proxy Falls hikes on the same trip.

To reach Proxy Falls, simply head west on Highway 242 past Sisters High School over McKenzie Pass. The Proxy Falls Trailhead is about 14 miles beyond the summit. If McKenzie Pass is closed, take Highway 126 over Santiam Pass toward Eugene, and turn left (east) onto the western end of Highway 242 after Belknap Springs. The Proxy Falls Trail is about 9 miles east between mileposts 64 and 65.

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