

Repairs essential after even small slides, ODOT says

Slide south of Warrenton one of many in state

A two-week project began this week to repair a slide that undermined the road and is impacting Highway 101 between Camp Rilea and Sunset Beach.

Work is scheduled between 7:30 a.m. at 6 p.m. weekdays through Feb. 23.

A contractor working for the Oregon Department of Transportation is applying soil nails to the slide area, which requires closure of the southbound lane. Flaggers are directing traffic through the area.

While the slide south of Warrenton is less visible than many, landslides are a way of life in Oregon, the Department of Transportation says. Late last month, a landslide closed Highway 30 east of Astoria.

Unfortunately, the chances of them occurring have risen after last year's devastating wildfires.

"Primarily what I want to know is how much time we have left for our highways in certain areas," said Curran Mohney, an ODOT senior engineering geologist. "What's the life span of our highways on the coast and in our stressed areas? How fast are landslides accelerating, especially with climate change drivers? How long until we lose that battle?"

Mohney's Statewide Project Delivery group analyzes thousands of pieces of data regularly to try to get a handle on the complex situation.

Because, Mohney said, Mother Nature will ultimately win.

One project Mohney directs is in year four of its seven-year life and involves



Oregon Department of Transportation
The Hookskanaden Slide near Brookings moved across Highway 101 in March 2019, disrupting traffic for several months.

monitoring five landslide sites along the coast.

In January 2017, Mohney, along with students and professors from Portland State and Oregon State universities, installed sensors and monitors so data collection could begin.

"It's coming along really, really well – almost better than I thought it would," Mohney said. "We have some really smart kids, young and enthusiastic, and several very experienced professors; I couldn't have asked for better."

Two of the slides Mohney and his team are monitoring have had serious movement in the past several years: Arizona and Hooskanaden, between Brookings and South Beach in Southern Oregon. In both, the team lost instruments.

"The deep monitors are generally viewed as sacrificial anyway; it just happened sooner than we thought because the landslides moved so fast," he said. "We still have surface change detection using UAV (unmanned aerial vehicles, or drones) and ground-based Lidar."

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This newer technology allows the team to pick up where the in-ground instruments leave off when they are sheared.

Mohney said the project is increasing knowledge that will benefit the state in many ways.

"It's telling us things about how and why landslides happen in certain places," he said. "Just imagining what our issues are going to be with climate change and Cascadia (the Cascadia Subduction Zone Earthquake) – it seems insurmountable. So if we can figure out anything about where, why, how, then we can be prepared. Maybe we can go out ahead of time and make smart decisions."

Mohney and the team used buried material, including a tree trunk, to radiocarbon date the Hooskanaden Slide and found that it occurred about 270 years ago – around 30 years younger than the last Cascadia Subduction Zone earthquake.

He said that means if the slide wasn't directly initiated by the Cascadia event, it was certainly affected by it.

State gets funding to become part of national suicide hotline

A national suicide prevention hotline is in the works.

As the nation is accustomed to dialing 911 for public safety emergencies, there will be a three-digit number for suicide emergencies: 988.

"We look forward to having another tool to help us save lives," said Patrick Allen, director of the Oregon Health Authority.

Oregon received a \$135,000 grant to join the national effort from Vibrant Emotional Health, the non-profit group that administers the national suicide prevention hotline.

"We're grateful to Vibrant for awarding these funds to help us move forward with our strategic planning and infrastructure to make 988 accessible to all Oregonians," Allen said.

The 988 emergency number goes live nationwide on July 16, 2022.

The grant will help Ore-

gon with resources, training, technical assistance, and infrastructure needs to allow access to the new number.

The new 988 number will become the national three-digit dialing code for the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline, replacing the current phone number of 1-800-273-TALK. Anyone needing support should continue to call 1-800-273-TALK until the new number is active in July 2022.

"The recognition that mental health and addiction crises are as important and pervasive as physical health crises is a long time coming," said Steve Allen, OHA behavioral health director.

"The new 988 number is easy to learn and quick to use, allowing for a simple way to access crisis services for anyone struggling with a mental health or addiction emergency."

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