

Eisenhower State Office Building
700 SW Harrison
Topeka, KS 66603



phone: 785-296-3585
fax: 785-368-7415
www.ksdot.org

Julie Lorenz, Secretary

Laura Kelly, Governor

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For more information:

Mike Quizon
785.640.9340

Weather Delays I-70 Lewis and Clark Viaduct Project

The completion of the Lewis and Clark Viaduct I-70 westbound bridge reconstruction, which was due to be completed in December 2019, will be delayed. High water has prevented crews from accessing pier sites in the Kansas River. While the sites remain inaccessible, work on the piers, which are upright supports for the superstructure, cannot continue. The Lewis and Clark Viaduct crosses the Kansas River 1500 feet from the confluence of the Missouri River, making it susceptible to high water conditions from both rivers.

“We need the water level to come down to safely continue the work,” said Jason Van Nice, KDOT Metro Engineer for Wyandotte County. According to the National Weather Service, the Kansas River at 23rd St exceeded 36 feet on May 22, 2019, twice the daily average.

Above-average spring rain and late season snow contributed to elevated flood risk for 25 states facing major or moderate flooding from March through May, including Kansas and Missouri, according to the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration’s Spring Outlook.

“Significant, record breaking flooding is already underway across the Lower Missouri River Basin. A storm system in the middle of March brought 2-4 inches of rain across the already saturated area. The combined effects of these rains and snowmelt also produced enhanced runoff. The northern Plains have an above normal snowpack, and the flood risk is expected to stay relatively high for the region throughout the spring,” according to NOAA.

Between March 13 and May 21, 2019, crews lost 58 of 70 possible workdays due to the high water. This week’s weather in the Kansas City metro has already produced two to four inches of rain, with more on the way in the coming days. KDOT won’t have an updated completion date estimate until crews can access the work sites and make an assessment. Current detour and traffic control measures will remain in place until the completion of the project.

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