

Highways Officials won't say when 17 will open

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State officials said this morning that Highway 17 will most likely reopen to normal traffic before Thanksgiving Day — but there is no official opening date set right now.

Caltrans public information representatives, normally very willing to discuss the ongoing repairs to the highway, said they had been ordered to say nothing about the reopening this morning and, instead, to refer all inquiries to Kevin Brett, press secretary to Gov. George Deukmejian in Sacramento.

Calls to the governor's office were, in turn, referred to Caltrans public information chief

Jim Drago. Drago said that engineers overseeing the seven-day-a-week work on clearing landslides and repairing damaged pavement wouldn't set a date on reopening Highway 17.

"It will be before Thursday (Thanksgiving), but I can't say when," Drago told reporters.

"When we know, you'll know," Drago said.

In the meantime, travel over the roadway remains restricted. Highway patrolmen will be escorting cars over the hill this weekend from 5 to 11 a.m. and 3 to 7 p.m. Next week, until the road is reopened, convoys will be restricted to 5 to 9 a.m. and 3 to 7 p.m.