

# Truckers Rep: AZ on Wrong Road with Rest Area Closures

PHOENIX - Thirteen roadside rest areas along Arizona highways are already shut down because of cuts to the state's Department of Transportation budget. If lawmakers impose another 15 percent cut in next week's special session, ADOT says barricades could go up at the remaining five rest stops, as well.

Arizona Teamsters' Business Representative Joseph Rhein says that could present a traffic hazard, when fatigue forces truckers to park along the freeways and off-ramps because there isn't a rest area available.

"Most highways have just enough space there to pull over if there's a safety concern, but not for sleeping alongside the road. They shouldn't be there. It should be a temporary thing, not something that they're going to take a four, five, six-hour nap."

A-DOT says it is working to get roadside businesses to agree to allow drivers to use their restroom facilities, free of charge. Rhein, who represents Local 104 in Phoenix, says most parking lots simply cannot accommodate big rigs, however. In some rural locations, he explains, there is space for trucks to park near convenience stores and restaurants, but not necessarily on pavement.

"I know in different counties in the state of Arizona, you have these big empty fields and stuff that's close by. But the dust factor -- there's codes against that too, stirring up all that dirt."

With fewer places to stop along the highways, Rhein fears that some drivers won't be taking breaks when they should, jeopardizing their own and others' safety.

"It's human nature to do that, go as far as you can before you have to stop, because most of those guys are paid by the miles -- and if your wheels are parked, you're not getting paid."

Rhein says with rest areas closed, he's concerned some truckers will just keep driving when they should be stopping to at least stretch their legs.