

Peak Construction: Helping to Ensure Motorist Safety During Oversized Shipments

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The first superload shipments made the journey from CarWil's fabrication facility in Winnemucca to Thacker Pass in January. Regular shipments resume May 11, with approximately 100 pipe rack modules scheduled to make the trip between May and August.

If you've ever watched a massive piece of industrial equipment roll slowly down a highway, flanked by escort vehicles with flashing lights, you know it's a sight worth stopping for.

Construction at Thacker Pass in Humboldt County, Nevada is entering its peak activity between now and the end of 2026, marked by increased frequency of deliveries of large pieces of equipment .

Specialized vendors are completing fabrication, and plant construction has progressed to allow installation of large vessels, transformers, cooling towers, conveyor belts and chemical processing equipment as well as infrastructure that was built off-site, such as pipe racks. These are the massive steel and pipe frameworks that will carry fluids through a processing plant. Each one is a significant piece of the puzzle in building what will become one of the largest lithium operations in North America.

Between May and August, about 100 pipe rack modules (large metal frameworks containing pre-installed piping for plant processes) will be transported from the fabricator, CarWil in Winnemucca, to Thacker Pass – about 65 miles north.

Permitted shipment timeframes will be posted by NDOT to **NVRoads.com** before transportation day. Lithium Americas will also share shipment dates in our weekly community newsletter so northern Nevada residents can

plan ahead. To subscribe to the newsletter, contact community@lithiumamericas.com

Promoting safety of oversized loads

Each shipment is the culmination of months of coordination between Lithium Americas, Bechtel (our engineering, procurement, and construction management contractor), the trucking company, CarWil, the Nevada Department of Transportation (NDOT) and the Nevada State Police.

Shipments as large as the pipe racks (about 90 feet long and 24 feet wide) are classified as “superloads” and fall under state regulations to ensure public safety, protect roads and bridges from excessive wear, and manage traffic flow.

For example, shippers may need to submit a study showing that a load can navigate all turns and pass under all overpasses on its route.

“Each year, we issue more than 30,000 oversize and overweight permits,” said NDOT Public Information Manager Meg Ragonese.

“With safety as top priority, NDOT’s over dimensional vehicle permit process regulates appropriate travel for vehicle loads exceeding 80,000 pounds gross weight, including applicable highway routes, travel hours, oversize signage and pilot car requirements.

This important process takes into consideration roadway geometry to avoid low clearance areas, weight-restricted bridges and more.”

The route to Thacker Pass

Although final routes are determined by NDOT and the Nevada State Police, the Thacker Pass shipments will generally travel from CarWil, near the Winnemucca Airport, on Interstate 80 for a short distance (bypassing downtown Winnemucca) and taking an exit east of town to go north on U.S. 95 to Orovada.

They’ll then go west on State Route 293 for another ~18 miles to Thacker Pass. On two-lane sections of road, the police escorts will direct oncoming motorists to pull over to allow the shipment to pass.

Pipe rack modules are among several large components bound for Thacker Pass as major construction activity ramps up. Additional equipment, including a large steam turbine generator, will arrive from fabricators in Texas, Utah, Oregon and other states, with shipments continuing through the end of 2026.

These shipments travel long-haul routes before entering Nevada, passing through multiple states and communities along the way.

Northern Nevada's access to truck and rail shipping is a key driver for many industries – including mining and agriculture.

“Nevada stands as one of the West’s most vital transportation thoroughfares,” said Ragonese. “With major interstates such as I-80 stretching coast to coast and I-15 channeling traffic between Southern California, Las Vegas and the Mountain West, the state plays a critical role in national logistics and commerce. We want drivers to be aware of, and drive safely near, Nevada’s important freight shipments.”

Safety tips for motorists

NDOT shares this advice for motorists if they encounter oversized or superload shipments:

- Plan Ahead
 - Visit NVRoads.com and select “Trucker Information/Oversized Loads” to view current oversized loads on Nevada highways.
 - Plan for extra travel time and note any optional detours or safe stopping areas that may be available.
 - Keep a full gas tank and pack non-perishable food and drink, as well as a printed Nevada state map for areas without reliable mobile service.
- Watch for Pilot Vehicles
 - Be alert for escort cars with flashing lights and "Oversized Load" signs.
 - This is your signal to slow down, yield or pull over as needed.
- Keep a Long Following Distance
 - Stopping distances are further than a regular car or truck.
 - Stay far behind to provide enough reaction time for stops or other emergencies.
 - Increase your following distance in uphill areas.
- Expect Wide Turns
 - Oversized loads require a lot more space to turn and may turn from middle lanes. Never squeeze between a turning truck and the curb.
- Be Patient and Predictable
 - Typically, oversized loads will drive well below the speed limit and stay in the right-hand lane.
 - Be courteous, cautious, and considerate when sharing the road.
 - Avoid aggressive behaviors like honking or weaving, which can cause dangerous distractions and



crashes.

- Avoid Blind Spots
 - If you cannot see a truck driver in their side mirrors, they cannot see you.
 - Avoid unnecessary passing or lingering alongside an oversized load, as they may need to shift lanes suddenly to avoid obstacles.
 - If safe to pass on multi-lane roads, do so swiftly and only when you have a clear, long stretch of road. Do not move back into the truck's lane until you can see the entire front of the vehicle in your rearview mirror.