

Nev. highway construction stopped to accommodate Hot August Nights

By Juan Lopez, Reno Gazette-Journal

When Hot August Nights was first gaining a footing in Northern Nevada, Scott Magruder thought, "Well, this will only last for a couple of years."

Little planning went into dealing with the influx of vintage cars those first years, said Magruder, spokesman for the Nevada Department of Transportation.

"Then we had all those cars backed up on Mount Rose and were overheating, (so) we started putting it in our (construction) contracts that we would do most of the work behind the barricade, but there would be no ramp or lane closures during Hot August Nights."

Since older cars are more susceptible than newer vehicles to overheat in traffic, Magruder said, the traffic-reducing decision was made then to discontinue any highway construction work while Hot August Nights, now 25 years old, was in town. A majority of the work on highway construction projects was shut down Friday and will resume Monday after Hot August Nights concludes to lessen lane closures and highway congestion.

And traffic-reducing measures could not come at a better time, said Sgt. Jim Stegmaier with the Reno Police Department Traffic Division. Stegmaier, who has been on the force for 23 years, said he has "never seen construction work get this bad in this area."

"It's horrible," he said. "Obviously, we have some big construction projects that are going on. These projects are

creating tons of jobs, but at the same time, the timing is really bad with Hot August Nights coming into town. I've never seen it this bad before."

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