

PRESS RELEASE FOR IMMEDIATE PUBLICATION:
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Ray County Emergency Management – Richmond, Missouri, August 21, 2017 marks the day of the “Great American Eclipse”, being the first total solar eclipse to traverse the United States from coast to coast since 1918, and the first to be exclusive to the U.S. since 1776. Because of historically good weather conditions during this time of year in the region, many eclipse-goers will focus on portions of Idaho and Wyoming in hopes of gleaning the best view possible. This highly anticipated event will bring exceptionally large numbers of people to the area as they travel towards the path of totality. Due to the sheer volume of traffic expected, there will likely be significant impact to services throughout Ray County, and especially in Richmond and surrounding areas.

What to expect

In the days leading up to the eclipse, the day of, and for a time afterward, there will be marked impacts to the local and regional area. These impacts will include, but are not limited to the following:

Travel

Highways will be experiencing much higher than normal volumes of traffic. This will likely begin up to a week in advance of the eclipse, and will potentially remain for days afterward. Primary and secondary roads are likely to be congested, most notably during times that are nearest the actual eclipse event. On the day of the eclipse, daylight will be diminished for a period of hours before, during, and after the totality event. Travelers are asked to utilize headlights throughout the day to help with visibility of traffic. Be patient, and plan for significant increases in travel time to all daily activities. Western Missouri counties will also see heavy traffic impact during this time. Be courteous and plan ahead.

Communications

With the dramatic increase of area population, cellular phone service will likely suffer outages. When communicating with cellular devices, use text rather than voice, as text messaging is not as resource intensive as voice or video calls. NOTICE: Ray County can currently receive 911 communications via text message. There is some possibility of internet service and landline phone service interruptions during high-demand times. Despite this, landlines will likely be much more reliable than cellular services, especially for emergency calls.

Emergency services

Local law enforcement and other emergency services are going to be operating with “all hands-on deck”. However, because of the large population increase, and limited numbers of first responders, some services may be delayed and prioritized in high-demand situations. If you encounter emergency vehicles on the road, please give them right of way to allow them to respond as quickly and safely as possible.

Food and supplies

Food and fuel supplies may become more limited due to the increased demand with the spike in population through the coming weeks. Demand will increase, but supply chains will likely be bottlenecked by traffic and availability problems.

Ways to prepare

Being prepared for the event will help to minimize any negative impacts. Again, we must emphasize that any who will be travelling during this timeframe should allow themselves ample time to arrive safely at their destination. Food and other needed supplies should be acquired a week or two in advance whenever possible, to avoid the possibility of shortages. Where possible, it is also recommended to have extra fuel on hand in gas cans.

Because of likely cellular outages, it would be good practice to know landline phone locations in the event of an emergency. Notify family and friends that services may not function properly during high demand. A good rule of thumb is to prepare as if a large ice storm was predicted.

Personal safety precautions

Eye protection

Eye protection should be worn at ALL times except during TOTALITY. Even at 99% eclipse, the sun’s rays can cause permanent damage your eyes if you look directly at it. Only during totality, when the sun’s rays are completely blocked, is it safe to remove eye protection. All eye protection should meet ISO 12312-2:2015

requirements to be considered safe for direct viewing of the sun. Many “eclipse glasses” do not meet this specification, so be careful when shopping around. Eclipse glasses are available at various locations, including Richmond Chamber of Commerce and the Ray County Museum.

Stay informed

Residents are encouraged to stay informed by monitoring local broadcast and print media, social media ([https://www.facebook.com/Ray County Emergency Management](https://www.facebook.com/RayCountyEmergencyManagement)). Ray County Emergency Management will make every effort to supply updates as situations change throughout the area.

Be aware of emergency alert systems

In emergency situations, notification is critical. Ray County currently has mass-call capability through a system called Nixle, which allows us to notify people of urgent or emergent situations via phone, text, email, and through Nixle app alerts. If you need alerts on a cell phone, or other devices, text 777888 and your zip code.

Another great source for emergency alerts is NOAA Weather Radio Public Alerts. If you have a weather radio with the Public Alert function, it can lie dormant until an alert is issued, at which time it will set off a tone and provide a warning message. This system is utilized not only for weather alerts, but also for other emergencies like Amber Alerts, Boil water orders, etc. For any questions, contact Ray County Emergency Management.

Definitions:

Solar eclipse – As seen from the Earth, a solar eclipse is a type of eclipse that occurs when the Moon passes between the Sun and Earth, and the Moon fully or partially blocks the Sun.

Path of totality – A path, approximately 70 miles wide, that the moon’s shadow will trace during the eclipse.

Locations along this path will experience a period (up to a few minutes) of complete darkness as the sun’s light is completely blocked out.

For additional information, contact:

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