

Avoid Hot Brakes



When vehicle brakes are used too much or too aggressively, they can heat up to the point they can no longer stop a vehicle. One of the quickest ways your brakes will fail in Colorado is if you are not driving in a lower gear while on steep grades in mountain corridors. To avoid this issue, CMV drivers in Colorado should travel down steep hills in the same gear that they climbed up.

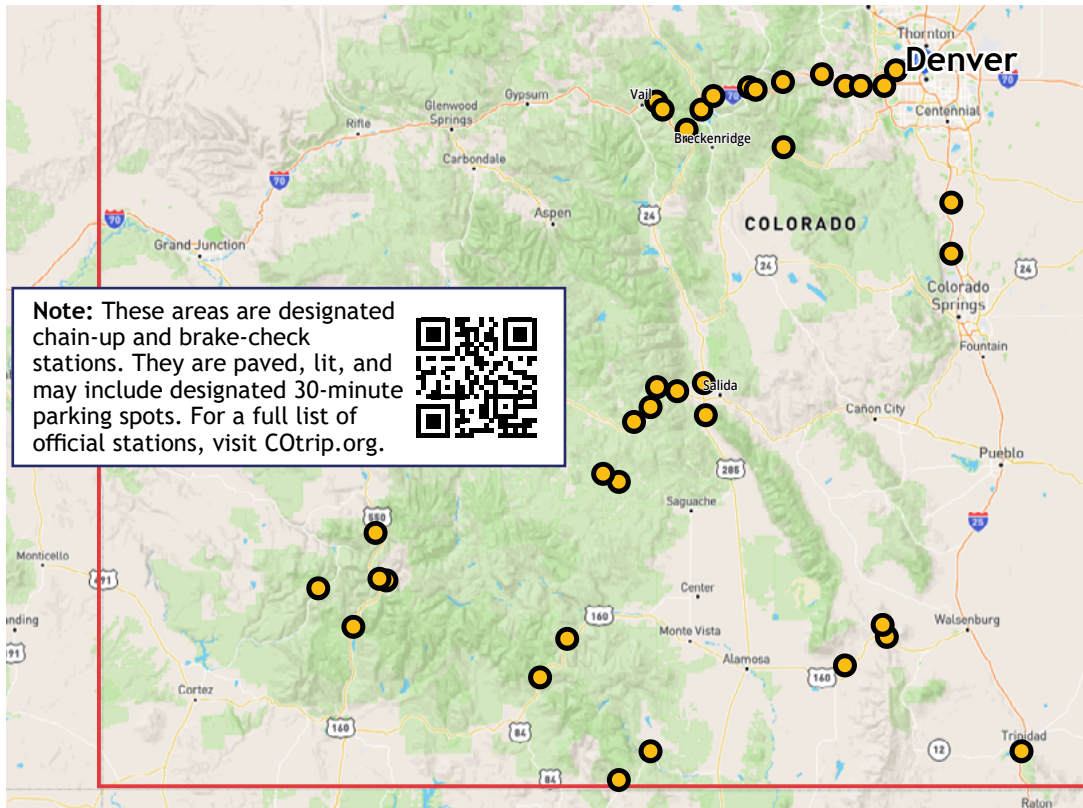
Conducting a pre-trip inspection and additional

brake-check inspections mid-route helps drivers recognize potential problems, especially related to brake issues. It is critical that all drivers conduct an additional pre-trip inspection before entering Colorado's steep grades. There are numerous brake check areas all around the state (see map below). Be sure to visit freight.colorado.gov to locate and utilize them along your route. Drivers can also use engine brakes or a lower gear to help maintain slower speeds on higher grades.

Begin with a brake check that include:

1. **Check brake lines, brake pads and/or drums.** With pads, make sure you are checking for proper thickness and that there are no cracks or fractures and no oil contamination. Also, check brake chambers and air lines for air leaks.
2. **Check tire pressure, tread depth and wheel seals to make sure they are not leaking.**
3. **Check the fluids and belts.** For example, check window washer fluid, oil levels, coolant level, brake fluid and transmission fluids.
4. **Familiarize yourself with the full route you are taking.** It is important to know where steep grades occur so you can better prepare for speed reductions before descending.

Brake check areas in Colorado:



Signs of hot brakes include:



Burning smell



Squealing



Smoke



Soft brake pedal



Reduced stopping power

Runaway Truck Ramps



Colorado has runaway truck ramps along major corridors to prevent crashes when truck brakes fail. Runaway truck ramps are usually located on steep, sustained grades in mountainous areas and exist to provide refuge when a vehicle loses its brakes traveling at higher speeds on steep downgrades.

If you are in a situation where using the truck ramp is imminent, do the following:

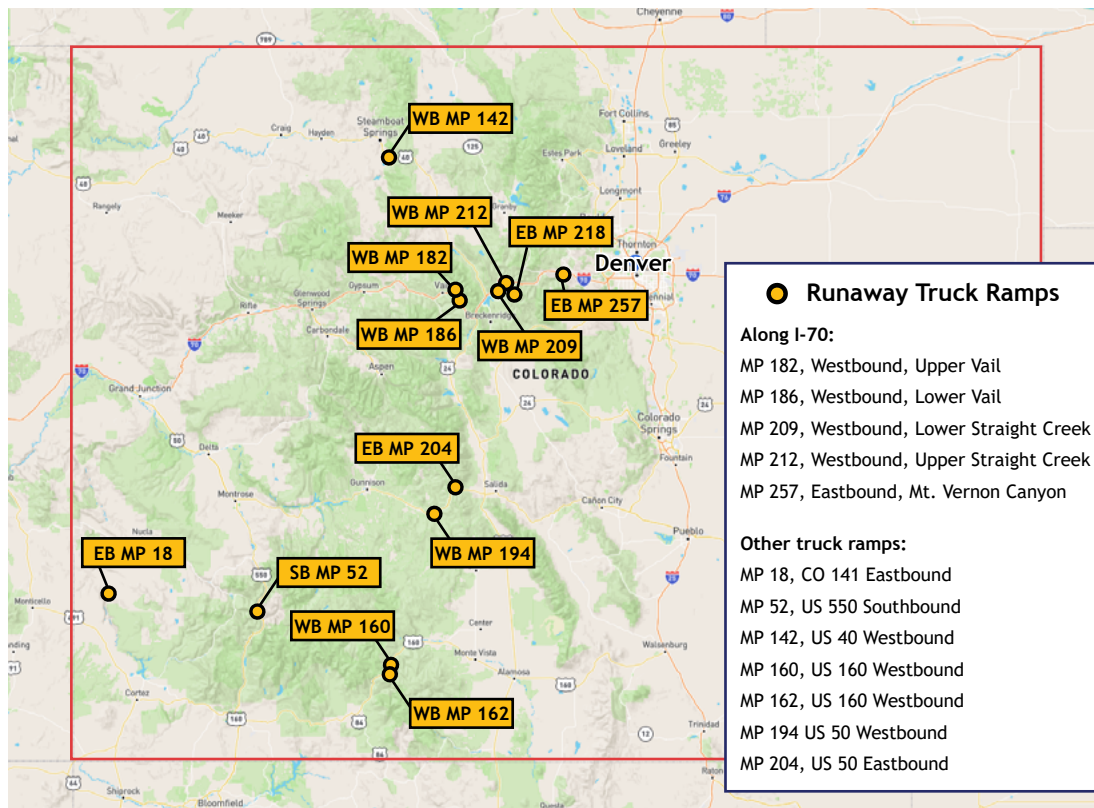
1. Turn on your hazards.
2. Get in the right lane.
3. Enter the truck ramp straight on.
4. Let the truck naturally come to a complete stop.
5. Call 911 to report the incident.

Here is the big don't: do not use highway exits instead of runaway truck ramps. Stay on the highway until you get to a runaway truck ramp or until you get to an incline on the road.

You may be responsible for a tow bill, but you will not be ticketed by CDOT or State Patrol.

You will, however, be cited if you cause a crash or injure others on the road because you opted not to use the runaway truck ramp when you needed it.

Runaway truck ramps in Colorado:



Key areas for hot brakes along Interstate 70 include westbound traffic just east of Silverthorne near exit 205, and eastbound traffic near Georgetown at exit 228.

Major truck crashes often happen at the switchback curve near the Wolf Creek scenic overlook on Colorado Highway 160