A water heater has a talent for being ignored until it behaves like a raccoon in the attic. One day it is quietly making showers pleasant, washing dishes, and keeping laundry civilized. The next day it is banging, leaking, sulking, or delivering a blast of cold water halfway through shampoo. At that point, everyone in the house suddenly becomes very interested in plumbing.

The good news is that most water heaters do not fail out of nowhere. They give hints. Sometimes they whisper, sometimes they gurgle like a swamp creature, and sometimes they leave a little puddle under the tank as if to say, "Perhaps we should talk." Catching those signs early, making smart repairs, and knowing when to call a professional Plumber can add years to the system's life.

Water heater repair is not just about restoring hot water for tonight. It is about slowing corrosion, reducing strain, improving efficiency, and preventing a small service call from turning into a full water heater installation before you were financially and emotionally prepared for one.

The water heater is not immortal, but it can age gracefully

Most traditional tank water heaters last somewhere around 8 to 12 years, depending on water quality, installation quality, maintenance, fuel type, and how hard the household uses it. Some limp past 15 years like a stubborn old pickup truck. Others fail at year six because they were installed badly, neglected completely, or fed a steady diet of mineral-heavy water.

Tankless units often last longer, sometimes 15 to 20 years or more, but they are not magic boxes. They still need flushing, descaling, good venting, proper gas or electrical supply, and occasional attention from someone who knows the difference between "normal combustion noise" and "that thing is about to ruin your Friday."

The biggest enemy of most water heaters is not dramatic failure. It is slow decay. Sediment builds at the bottom of the tank. Anode rods dissolve. Valves seize. Expansion stress beats on fittings. Water quality chews at metal. A minor plumbing leak repair gets postponed because "it's just a drip," and six months later the floor looks like it has been hosting a private swamp convention.

Repair work that extends lifespan focuses on reducing these stresses before they become permanent damage.

Sediment: the gritty little villain in the tank

If you have a tank-style water heater, sediment is almost certainly collecting at the bottom. Minerals in the water, especially calcium and magnesium, settle as water heats. In areas with hard water, that sediment can form a crusty layer that acts like an unwanted blanket between the burner or heating element and the water.

In gas water heaters, sediment forces the burner to work harder to heat the same volume of water. The metal at the bottom of the tank can overheat, expand, contract, and eventually weaken. In electric models, sediment can bury the lower heating element, causing it to run hotter than it should. That shortens element life and can make recovery painfully slow.

One common service call starts with a homeowner saying, "The hot water runs out faster than it used to." Sometimes the tank is undersized for the household, sure. But often the tank has lost effective capacity because several gallons of space are occupied by mineral sludge. I have seen water heaters cough out cloudy, chunky discharge during flushing that looked less like water and more like soup from a haunted cafeteria.

Flushing the tank helps, but timing matters. If the heater is relatively young and has been maintained, flushing once a year is usually reasonable. In hard-water areas, every six months may make sense. If the heater has never been flushed and it is already 10 years old, aggressive flushing can sometimes stir up sediment that clogs valves or reveals leaks that were already waiting in the wings. That does not mean do nothing. It means proceed with judgment.

A professional performing water heater repair can assess whether flushing is worthwhile, whether the drain valve needs replacement, and whether sediment has already damaged the system. If the drain valve is plastic, old, or crusted with mineral deposits, replacing it with a quality full-port brass valve can make future maintenance much less theatrical.

The anode rod: small part, big sacrifice

Inside most tank water heaters is an anode rod, a metal rod designed to corrode before the tank does. It is the water heater's sacrificial bodyguard. Magnesium, aluminum, or zinc-aluminum rods attract corrosive elements in the water, slowing rust inside the tank.

The catch is that the anode rod gets used up. Once it is gone, the tank itself becomes the buffet.

Checking and replacing the anode rod is one of the most overlooked ways to extend water heater lifespan. It is not glamorous work. Nobody brags at a cookout about their fresh anode rod unless they are the kind of person who also alphabetizes pipe fittings. But it matters.

In many homes, inspecting the anode rod every 2 to 3 years is sensible. In hard water or softened water, it may need attention sooner. Water softeners can be excellent for fixtures, appliances, and skin, but softened water may increase anode consumption in some systems. That does not mean water softener installation is bad. It means water treatment and water heater maintenance should be thought of as roommates, not strangers.

A rotten egg smell in hot water can sometimes point to an anode rod reacting with bacteria in the tank. Replacing the rod with a different material may help, though odor issues can also involve water chemistry, well systems, or plumbing layout. A good Plumber will not just toss in a part and whistle away. They will ask whether the smell is only in hot water, whether the home uses a well, whether a softener is installed, and whether the system has been disinfected.

Temperature settings: comfort, safety, and tank stress

Many residential water heaters are set around 120 degrees Fahrenheit. That temperature is hot enough for most household needs and reduces scald risk compared with higher settings. It also lowers energy use and reduces stress on the tank. Some households prefer 130 degrees for dishwasher performance or higher hot-water demand, but higher temperatures come with trade-offs.

Every 10 degrees above typical settings can increase energy consumption, though the exact amount depends on insulation, usage, and standby loss. Hotter water also accelerates mineral precipitation, meaning more sediment. It can shorten the life of rubber components and increase pressure expansion.

There is also the safety issue. Water at 140 degrees can scald quickly, especially for children, older adults, and people with limited mobility. If a system must store water hotter for a specific reason, a mixing valve can temper delivery temperature at fixtures. That is not a DIY guessing game. Improper mixing valve setup can turn showers into a trust exercise nobody requested.

For electric heaters, thermostat problems can cause water that is too hot, not hot enough, or wildly inconsistent. For gas heaters, gas control valve issues, burner problems, thermocouple faults, and venting concerns can all affect performance. When temperature changes suddenly without a clear reason, it is time for proper diagnosis.

Pressure is useful until it starts bullying the system

Water heaters do not enjoy excessive pressure. Neither do pipes, washing machine hoses, toilet fill valves, or your ceiling drywall. If household water pressure is too high, every fixture pays the price.

Most homes perform best with water pressure somewhere around 40 to 60 psi. Many plumbing codes consider pressures above 80 psi too high and require a pressure-reducing valve. The exact requirement depends on local code, but the practical point is simple: high pressure shortens plumbing life.

Thermal expansion also matters. When water heats, it expands. In a closed plumbing system, that expansion needs somewhere to go. If it has nowhere to go, pressure spikes occur. Those spikes can trigger the temperature and pressure relief valve, stress fittings, and shorten tank life. An expansion tank, properly sized and charged, can solve this problem.

A dripping relief valve should never be ignored. Sometimes the valve itself has failed. Sometimes pressure is too high. Sometimes thermal expansion is the culprit. Replacing the relief valve without checking pressure is like replacing a smoke alarm because it keeps detecting smoke. Technically action was taken, but the important problem remains.

Warning signs that deserve attention

Water heaters are not subtle forever. The trick is catching the signs while they are still affordable. One puddle, one odd noise, or one rusty *Look at more info* streak does not automatically mean disaster, but it does mean the system is asking for a closer look.

Here are the signs I would not ignore:

- Hot water turns rusty, cloudy, or metallic-smelling, especially if it only affects the hot side.
- The tank pops, bangs, rumbles, or hisses during heating.
- Water appears around the base, fittings, drain valve, or relief valve discharge pipe.
- Hot water runs out much faster than usual without a change in household use.
- The pilot will not stay lit, the breaker trips repeatedly, or the unit shows recurring error codes.

That is one of the few lists worth making because these symptoms tend to get minimized. People will live with a rumbling tank for months, naming it “Old Thunder,” then act surprised when it fails during a holiday weekend with three guests and a load of towels in the washer.

Repair or replace? The honest conversation

Good water heater repair is not automatically cheaper than replacement, and replacement is not automatically the smarter choice. Age, condition, parts availability, water damage risk, fuel type, efficiency, and installation quality all matter.

If a 3-year-old electric water heater needs a heating element, repair is usually a straightforward decision. If a 12-year-old tank has rust at the bottom seam and a failed gas control valve, repair may be throwing money at a

sinking canoe. A leaking tank itself cannot be patched in a meaningful, reliable way. Once the storage tank has failed, replacement is the real fix.

The tricky middle ground is where judgment matters. A 9-year-old heater with a bad thermocouple might have several useful years left if the tank is clean, the anode rod has life, and there is no rust. A 7-year-old heater with severe sediment, repeated relief valve discharge, and signs of corrosion may be closer to retirement than its age suggests.

Labor costs also change the equation. Some repairs are inexpensive parts but require enough time and access work that replacement begins to make more financial sense. This is especially true if the installation is already substandard. If the vent connector is wrong, the pan is missing, the shutoff valve is frozen, the expansion tank is absent, and the unit is jammed into a closet like someone installed it with a shoehorn, a simple repair can expose a bigger need to bring the setup into safe, serviceable condition.

Gas water heaters: flame, venting, and respect

Gas water heaters are reliable when installed and maintained correctly, but they deserve respect. Combustion appliances need adequate gas supply, clean burners, proper draft, and safe venting. A lazy yellow flame, soot, melted plastic near the draft hood, or scorch marks are not decorative accents. They are warning signs.

A gas installation service or qualified plumbing professional should handle gas line modifications, gas control replacements, combustion issues, and venting corrections. Carbon monoxide risk is not a place for internet bravery. If a water heater shares space with a furnace, boiler, or other combustion appliance, the room's air supply and venting become even more important. A Heating contractor or Furnace repair service may need to evaluate the broader mechanical room if draft issues involve multiple appliances.

Backdrafting can occur when exhaust gases spill into the room instead of venting outdoors. It can be caused by blocked vents, inadequate combustion air, house depressurization, or improper vent design. Even a powerful kitchen hood or clothes dryer can contribute in some tight homes. That is why experienced technicians look beyond the water heater jacket. The problem may not be inside the tank at all.

Tankless gas units add another layer. They need descaling, clean inlet filters, correct vent materials, proper condensate drainage for condensing models, and enough gas volume. An undersized gas line can cause error codes and poor performance, especially when other appliances fire at the same time. Tankless systems are wonderful when designed correctly. When they are not, they can behave like divas with circuit boards.

Electric water heaters: simple, but not harmless

Electric water heaters have fewer moving parts than gas models, which makes them seem simple. In some ways, they are. Thermostats, heating elements, wiring, breakers, and limit switches do most of the work. But 240-volt equipment is not forgiving. If you are not comfortable verifying power safely, do not poke around because a stranger online said it "only takes ten minutes."

A failed lower element often causes lukewarm water or a short supply of hot water. A failed upper element can mean no hot water at all. Thermostats can stick or misread. Loose wiring can create heat damage. Breakers that trip repeatedly indicate a fault that needs diagnosis, not a breaker with a bad attitude.

This is where an Electrician may be needed, especially if the issue involves the panel, undersized wiring, damaged disconnects, or repeated breaker trips. A Plumber may replace elements and thermostats in many areas, depending on licensing and local rules, but electrical supply problems belong with electrical professionals. Good

tradespeople know where their lane ends. Great ones do not pretend the lane is wider because they brought a bigger wrench.

Leaks: tiny drips with expensive hobbies

Not every water heater leak means the tank has failed. Water can leak from threaded connections, flexible supply connectors, unions, shutoff valves, expansion tank fittings, the relief valve, or the drain valve. Condensation can also fool people, especially on gas units during heavy recovery or in cold spaces.

The location matters. Water dripping from the top may be a plumbing leak repair. Water from the drain valve may be fixed with a new valve or cap, depending on condition. Water from the relief discharge pipe may indicate valve failure, overheating, excess pressure, or thermal expansion. Water from the bottom of the tank, especially with rust, is far more concerning.

A pan under the water heater is helpful only if it drains somewhere useful. A pan without a drain is just a shallow swimming pool for your mechanical closet. In finished spaces, leak detection devices with automatic shutoff valves can be worth every penny. They are especially smart in upstairs laundry rooms, interior closets, condos, and vacation homes.

If you find water, do not immediately assume the worst, but do not ignore it either. Dry the area, watch where water reappears, check nearby pipes, and call for service if the source is not obvious. Water is patient. It will find drywall, flooring, framing, and anything else you hoped to keep dry.

Water quality can make or break the system

Hard water is one of the biggest factors in water heater performance. Scale reduces efficiency, clogs fixtures, damages appliances, and increases maintenance needs. If faucets crust over quickly or shower doors look frosted no matter how often you clean them, your water heater is dealing with the same minerals.

Water softener installation can reduce scale dramatically. It can help dishwashers, washing machines, faucets, showerheads, and tankless water heaters. But the system should be set up correctly, and maintenance should adjust to the new water chemistry. As mentioned earlier, softened water can affect anode rod life in tank heaters, so periodic inspection becomes more important.

For tankless systems, scale is particularly troublesome because heat exchangers have narrow passages. Annual descaling is common in hard-water areas. Skipping it can lead to reduced flow, error codes, overheating, and premature heat exchanger failure. A neglected tankless heater can be like a sports car filled with bargain-bin oil: technically still moving, but nobody should be proud.

Well water adds other concerns. Iron, manganese, sediment, acidity, and bacteria can all affect water heater life. Treatment may involve filtration, neutralizers, softeners, or disinfection, depending on the actual water test. Guessing at water treatment is expensive. Testing is cheaper than buying the wrong equipment and then pretending it helped.

The neighbors: drains, septic, HVAC, and the mechanical room ecosystem

A water heater rarely lives alone. It shares space with plumbing, drains, HVAC equipment, electrical wiring, gas piping, and sometimes a septic system connection through the broader household plumbing. Problems nearby can influence what looks like a water heater issue.

A floor drain backing up near the water heater may be a drain cleaning issue, not a leaking tank. If the water heater pan drains into a blocked line, you may need Rooter service or Hydrojetting rather than a new heater. If your home uses a septic system, repeated backups or slow drains may call for Septic system service. Blaming the water heater for every puddle in the utility room is understandable, but not always accurate. The poor thing already has enough responsibilities.

HVAC equipment also plays a role. A nearby furnace, air handler, or heat pump may produce condensate. An Air conditioning contractor or Air conditioning repair service may trace water near the heater to a clogged condensate drain, not plumbing at all. During cooling season, Air conditioning maintenance or an Air conditioning tune-up often includes clearing condensate lines, checking drain pans, and preventing the kind of mystery puddle that starts household debates.



In some homes, heat pump water heaters are installed in basements, garages, or utility rooms. These units pull heat from surrounding air and can cool and dehumidify the space. They are efficient, but placement matters. Put one in a tiny closet without enough air volume and performance suffers. Pairing water heating choices with Heat pump installation knowledge can be useful when homeowners are upgrading multiple systems.

Even lighting matters in a practical sense. I have worked in mechanical rooms where the biggest safety upgrade was not exotic equipment, but a decent fixture installed by a Lighting contractor or Electrician. If nobody can see the shutoff valve, read the data plate, or spot corrosion, maintenance tends to become a rumor.

Maintenance that actually extends lifespan

Maintenance does not need to be complicated, but it does need to be consistent. The right routine depends on tank versus tankless, gas versus electric, local water quality, and system age. A household with six people, hard water, and high laundry use will beat up a heater faster than a two-person home with moderate water use and treated water.

A practical maintenance rhythm looks like this:

- Check around the heater monthly for moisture, rust, scorch marks, damaged venting, or unusual smells.
- Flush tank heaters periodically, commonly once a year, adjusting for hard water and system condition.
- Inspect the anode rod every few years, sooner where water conditions are aggressive.

- Test or professionally inspect safety components, including the relief valve and expansion tank.
- Descale tankless heaters as recommended for your water hardness and manufacturer guidance.

That is the second and final list, because a maintenance checklist earns its keep. The rest is judgment.

One caution on relief valves: many homeowners are told to lift the test lever annually. That can verify operation, but older valves sometimes fail to reseat after testing, especially if mineral deposits are present. If there is no safe discharge path, if the valve is old, or if you are unsure what you are doing, have it checked during professional service. A safety valve that dribbles afterward is not a charming quirk.

Expansion tanks need air charge checks. They are often installed and then forgotten until the bladder fails. A failed expansion tank can feel full of water, show incorrect pressure, or stop absorbing expansion. If relief valves keep discharging, the expansion tank deserves suspicion.

Installation quality determines repair frequency

Many “repair” problems are really installation problems wearing a fake mustache. The water heater may be fine, but the surrounding setup is wrong.

Common installation defects include missing expansion tanks, improper vent slope, undersized gas piping, no sediment trap where required, incorrect pipe materials, unsupported expansion tanks, missing drain pans, inaccessible shutoff valves, and flexible connectors bent into shapes that would embarrass a pretzel.

Water heater installation should account for service access. If a technician needs the flexibility of a circus performer to reach the anode rod, future maintenance is less likely to happen. If the heater is shoved against a wall so the drain valve cannot be used, flushing becomes a mess. If the shutoff valve is corroded open, an emergency leak becomes more exciting than necessary.

In older homes, plumbing repiping may enter the conversation. Galvanized steel pipes, deteriorated copper, polybutylene, or chronic pinhole leaks can affect water delivery and create debris that damages fixtures and appliances. A new water heater connected to failing piping is like putting new tires on a car with a cracked axle. It may help briefly, but the system problem remains.

Efficiency is not just about the yellow sticker

Water heater efficiency declines when sediment builds, burners get dirty, heating elements scale over, or hot water pipes lose heat unnecessarily. Repair and maintenance can restore some performance, but there are limits.

Insulating older hot water pipes can reduce wait time and heat loss, especially on long runs through basements, crawl spaces, or garages. Recirculation systems can improve convenience but may increase energy use if poorly controlled. A timer, aquastat, or demand button can reduce waste compared with a pump that runs constantly. Convenience has a cost, and the trick is not letting comfort quietly mug your utility bill.

Heat pump water heaters can be highly efficient in the right setting, but they have trade-offs. They may recover more slowly than standard electric tanks, make some noise, cool the surrounding space, and require condensate drainage. In a warm garage or basement, they can shine. In a cold, cramped closet, they may disappoint. A qualified Heating contractor, Plumber, or contractor familiar with Heat pump installation can help match equipment to the home rather than selling the shiniest box.

Tankless units save standby energy and provide continuous hot water within capacity, but they are not always the best fit. Large households may need upgraded gas lines, electrical circuits, venting, or multiple units. Maintenance is not optional. If you want endless showers, fine, but the heat exchanger will expect a spa day too.

When DIY makes sense, and when it gets silly

Homeowners can do useful observation. You can check for leaks, listen for new noises, note error codes, monitor hot water performance, and keep the area around the heater clear. You can often adjust temperature within safe limits if you understand the controls and follow the manufacturer's instructions. Some handy homeowners flush their own tanks successfully.

But certain work should be left to professionals. Gas work, venting changes, electrical repairs, relief valve discharge corrections, expansion tank installation, tankless diagnostics, and persistent leaks deserve trained eyes. Not because homeowners are helpless, but because mistakes can be expensive or dangerous.

The phrase "I watched a video" has preceded many service calls. Videos can be useful. They can also skip the part where the demonstrator has ideal access, code-compliant piping, new valves, soft water, and no surprises. Real homes have seized fittings, brittle plastic drain valves, mystery wiring, and shutoff valves that snap off at the worst possible moment.

If a repair involves turning off utilities, draining large volumes of water, opening gas lines, working near electricity, or modifying safety devices, the savings can disappear quickly if something goes sideways.

A lifespan mindset beats a panic mindset

The best way to extend water heater life is to stop treating the appliance like a metal barrel of infinite obedience. It needs inspection, flushing where appropriate, anode protection, pressure control, water quality management, and repairs done before damage spreads.

A well-maintained heater runs quieter, heats faster, wastes less energy, and fails less dramatically. It may not live forever, but it can avoid the kind of theatrical exit that involves wet carpet, cold showers, and a plumber arriving while you are wearing a bathrobe and the expression of a betrayed monarch.

Pay attention to the small signals. Rumbling means sediment may be winning. Rusty hot water means corrosion deserves investigation. A dripping relief valve means pressure, temperature, or the valve itself needs attention. A recurring breaker trip or pilot outage means something is wrong, not that the appliance is "moody."

Water heater repair, done thoughtfully, extends system lifespan because it addresses the causes of failure rather than just the symptoms. Sometimes that means replacing a heating element. Sometimes it means flushing sediment, replacing an anode rod, correcting pressure, adding an expansion tank, repairing a leak, improving venting, or admitting that replacement is the wiser move.

The water heater will never send a thank-you note. It will simply keep producing hot water without drama, which is honestly the best personality trait any appliance can have.

Name: Service Lion Plumbing Heating Air Electric

Address: 521 W Briardale Ave, Orange, CA 92865, United States

Phone: (657) 567-7305

Website: https://callservicelion.com/

Email: servicerequests@callservicelion.com

Hours:
Monday: Open 24 hours
Tuesday: Open 24 hours
Wednesday: Open 24 hours
Thursday: Open 24 hours
Friday: Open 24 hours
Saturday: Open 24 hours
Sunday: Open 24 hours

Open-location code: R48R+WV Orange, California, USA

Map/listing URL: https://www.google.com/maps/search/?api=1&query=Google&query_place_id=ChIJQU4LBWHV3IARtnABtyykSA4

Google Map:

Socials:
https://www.facebook.com/ServiceLionCA/ https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCR_L35QzsRTxYZtX8PxJvPw

Local Service Information

Service Lion Plumbing Heating Air Electric provides plumbing, drain, heating, air conditioning, and electrical services from its Orange, California location.

The company serves homeowners and properties throughout Orange and communities across Orange County and surrounding areas.

Available services include plumbing repairs, water heater work, drain and sewer services, heating and cooling service, electrical repairs, panels, lighting, outlets, and related home-system work.

Service is available for residential properties as well as light commercial needs described within the company's local service-area information.

The company's website emphasizes locally operated service, coordinated home-system support, and practical scheduling for plumbing, HVAC, and electrical needs.

The matching public business listing shows the Orange location as open 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

For service information or scheduling, call (657) 567-7305 or visit https://callservicelion.com/.

The public map listing identifies the business at 521 W Briardale Ave, Orange, CA 92865 and can be used for location and direction information.

Popular Questions About Service Lion Plumbing Heating Air Electric

What services does Service Lion Plumbing Heating Air Electric provide?
The company provides plumbing, drain and sewer, heating, air conditioning, and electrical services. Its published services include plumbing repair, water heaters, drain clearing, sewer work, HVAC repair and installation, electrical repairs, panels, circuit breakers, lighting, outlets, and related services.

Where is Service Lion Plumbing Heating Air Electric located?
The matching business location is 521 W Briardale Ave, Orange, CA 92865, United States.

What areas does Service Lion Plumbing Heating Air Electric serve?
The company serves Orange County and surrounding communities. Its published service-area information includes Orange, Anaheim, Brea, Yorba Linda, Fullerton, Huntington Beach, Newport Beach, Costa Mesa, Irvine, Lake Forest, and additional nearby cities.

Is Service Lion Plumbing Heating Air Electric open 24 hours?
The matching public business listing shows the location as open 24 hours on Monday through Sunday.

Does Service Lion Plumbing Heating Air Electric work on drains and sewer lines?
Yes. Published services include drain clearing, rooter service, camera inspection, hydro jetting, sewer line repair and installation, water line work, slab leak detection, and trenchless sewer line repair.

Does Service Lion Plumbing Heating Air Electric provide heating and air conditioning service?
Yes. Its published HVAC services include air conditioning repair and installation, heating service, furnace work, heat pumps, air ducts, indoor air quality assessments, and thermostat installation.

Does Service Lion Plumbing Heating Air Electric provide electrical service?
Yes. Published electrical services include repairs and installations, electrical panels, circuit breakers, safety inspections, lighting, outlets and switches, surge protection, generators, and EV charging equipment installation.

How can I contact Service Lion Plumbing Heating Air Electric?
Call (657) 567-7305.
Email: servicerequests@callservicelion.com
Website: https://callservicelion.com/
Facebook: https://www.facebook.com/ServiceLionCA/

Landmarks Near Orange, California

Old Towne Orange Historic District
A central historic district and useful geographic reference point for the Orange community.

Plaza Park

A well-known public gathering point in the center of Old Towne Orange.

Orange Public Library & History Center

A civic landmark serving residents near central Orange.

Hart Park

A major public park and recreation area south of central Orange.

Eisenhower Park

A public park serving neighborhoods in northern Orange.

Santiago Oaks Regional Park

A regional recreation and open-space landmark on the eastern side of Orange.

Irvine Regional Park

A large regional park and recognizable reference point east of the city.

Orange Park Acres

A distinctive residential community and service-area reference point in eastern Orange.

El Modena

An established Orange neighborhood that provides a practical local coverage reference.

Glassell Street

One of the city's principal north-south streets and a useful route through central Orange.

Lincoln Avenue

A major east-west roadway serving northern Orange and nearby communities.

State Route 55

A primary regional freeway connecting Orange with other parts of Orange County.