

CITY OF SPOKANE  
ADMINISTRATIVE POLICY AND PROCEDURE

CITY OF SPOKANE ADMINISTRATIVE POLICY AND PROCEDURE	ADMIN 1200-20-01 LGL 2020-0022
TITLE: <b>ENCAMPMENT REMOVAL AND CLEANUP POLICY</b> EFFECTIVE DATE: <b>November 13, 2020</b> REVISION DATE:	

1.0 GENERAL

1.1 PURPOSE AND INTENT

The purpose of this policy is to establish criteria and outline procedures for the removal and cleanup of encampments.

The intent of this policy is to promote the interests of public health and safety while also respecting the rights of unsheltered individuals and connecting them with available shelter services. The public health and safety concerns related to encampments have generated innumerable citizen complaints and have prompted city departments to send crews of personnel to clean up garbage and solid waste. The City's efforts have not only been costly, but have brought to light far more than a problem of mere unwanted litter.

Behaviors associated with encampments have resulted in a variety of problems that include, but are not limited to, uncontained fires, damage to trees and landscaping, contaminated hypodermic needles left out on open lands, biohazards such as exposed human waste, damage to critical infrastructure such as bridges and streets, and significant interference with the intended uses of public facilities. Additionally, there have been threats to the health and safety of the campers themselves and to the community.

The City of Spokane intends to address these issues by establishing this Encampment Removal and Cleanup Policy.

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## 2.0 DEPARTMENTS/DIVISIONS AFFECTED

This policy shall apply to the Spokane Police Department, Parks and Recreation and Neighborhood and Business Services.

## 3.0 REFERENCES

Washington State Constitution, Article XI, section 11

Spokane City Charter, Article 1 section 3

Spokane Municipal Code - Article VI. Protection of Public Lands and Properties, sections 12.02.1000 through 12.02.1012

Spokane Municipal Code section 12.02.0208

Spokane Municipal Code section 12.02.0737

Spokane Municipal Code section 10.10.026

Spokane Municipal Code section 12.06A.040.H.1

## 4.0 DEFINITIONS

4.1 Encampment means a site where one or more individuals or groups of persons temporarily reside outdoors.

## 5.0 POLICY

5.1 It is the policy of the City of Spokane to remove and clean up encampments on public property while respecting the personal property rights of campers.

## 6.0 PROCEDURE

### 6.1 REMOVAL AND CLEANUP CRITERIA

A. Any encampment on public property may be designated for removal and cleanup consistent with this policy.

B. The City will prioritize removal if any of the following conditions is observed or reasonably suspected in connection with an encampment:

1. physical threats or violence;
2. criminal activity not inherent in the act of unauthorized camping (e.g., drug use or sales, theft, sex trafficking, malicious mischief);
3. a condition that significantly increases the likelihood of disease or the spread of disease (e.g., rodents, exposed meat, human waste);

4. a condition that presents a significant risk of bodily injury or death (e.g., discarded needles, vehicular traffic, weapons);
  5. any other substantial threat to public health or safety;
  6. damage (including potential or foreseeable damage) to the natural environment of environmentally critical areas;
  7. significant amounts of trash;
  8. significant disruption to a primary intended use of public property (e.g., blocking a doorway, on a sports field or court; obstructing a large portion of a sidewalk);
  9. occupation of an area in which the public is not allowed to be present during the times camping is occurring.
- C. Any of the factors enumerated in the above section that are observed at an encampment that is the subject of removal should be documented with a specific description, which may include a police report, and available photographic or videographic evidence including footage from body worn cameras.
- D. In addition to documentation with regard to the aforementioned conditions, the police officer or other person responsible for documentation should include a statement whether such conditions place the public at risk and how removal of the encampment is related to preservation of public health or safety.

## 6.2 REMOVAL AND CLEANUP PROCEDURES

### A. Unoccupied Encampments – Written Notice Required Prior to Removal

For unoccupied encampments, written notice of removal will be posted on each tent and/or in any other distinct areas of the encampment. Reasonable efforts should be made to ensure that campers who are known to have difficulties understanding a written notice (whether because they are non-English speakers or impaired in some other way) receive the notice in a manner that is clear.

#### 1. Contents of Notice

The written notice will provide at least the following notifications:

- a. Campers must remove all their belongings from the site within 48 hours.
  - b. Campers should not leave behind any items they want to keep.
  - c. Campers unable to remove their belongings in time due to disability or an equivalent hindrance may call 311 or visit MySpokane at Spokane City Hall (808 W. Spokane Falls Blvd), to make a request for special assistance. The request will be evaluated for reasonableness, and if reasonable, accommodated to the extent practicable. Campers should not assume that a request for assistance will be approved or that the City will be able to accommodate the request.
  - d. Campers may call 311 or visit MySpokane at Spokane City Hall (808 W. Spokane Falls Blvd) to inquire about whether items that were left at an encampment have been stored. Campers may retrieve their belongings without fear of arrest solely on the basis that they are retrieving their belongings.
  - e. Campers wishing to minimize the risk of losing valued possessions in removals should always keep such items, to the extent possible, in visible, sanitary, and safely accessible bags or bins.
  - f. If the City does not clean up the site within a reasonable period of time, not to exceed five business days from expiration of the 48-hour period, the notice will be disregarded, and a new notice may then be posted.
  - g. Basic contact information for campers seeking shelters or social services.
2. Cleanup - After 48 hours, the City will clean up the site within a reasonable period of time.
    - a. Any campers who are present at that time will be directed to remove their belongings from the site.

- i. Items that a camper leaves behind will be deemed abandoned.
  - ii. Requests for additional time or assistance to remove items will be evaluated for reasonableness, and if reasonable, accommodated to the extent practicable.
- b. City staff, as designated by the Director of Code Enforcement, will conduct an inspection for any remaining, unclaimed items, to the extent this can be done safely. An inspection may be narrowed or terminated for one or more of the following reasons that render further inspection unsafe:
  - i. presence of one or more hypodermic needles (especially if uncapped);
  - ii. strong odor or visual indication of unsanitary condition (e.g., biological waste) permeating a tent or space;
  - iii. a tent or space that is soaked in liquid or mud;
  - iv. any other similar indication that further inspection or manipulation would be unsafe.
- c. Unclaimed items found in an inspection will be initially eligible for storage if and only if:
  - i. circumstances indicate that the item belongs to a person;
  - ii. the item has apparent utility in its current condition and circumstances; and
  - iii. the item can be safely retrieved from the site.

Examples of potentially storable items include: identification, medication stored in medication bottles with identifying information, art, art supplies, musical instruments, and items that reasonably appear to have sentimental value in their current condition. An item need not be in new or perfect condition to have apparent utility.

- d. An eligible item found in an inspection will be put into storage, unless it is determined to meet one of the following disqualifying conditions:
  - i. hazardous (e.g., items contaminated with human waste, explosives, moldy items);
  - ii. likely to become hazardous in storage (e.g., perishables, wet materials that might become moldy, items covered in mud);
  - iii. practically un-storable, due to large size, weight, or other similar characteristic;
  - iv. contraband or stolen;
  - v. is on the City's current list (as published on the City's website) of common types of items that, in the experience of City staff, campers regularly abandon during encampment removals, and there is no contrary indication as to the specific item.
- e. Any items taken into storage will be kept in storage for up to 60 days. In addition to information already available on the notice, information about how stored items can be retrieved shall be available on the City of Spokane's website.

3. If the City does not clean up the site within a reasonable period of time, not to exceed five business days from expiration of the 48-hour period, the notice will be disregarded, and a new notice may then be posted.

4. Stored items may be retrieved from storage based on a description with sufficient specificity to demonstrate ownership.

## B. Occupied Encampments

For occupied encampments, when shelter is available in the City, the City will provide campers with shelter and service information while expediting cleanup and removal of the site.

1. Campers will be directed to remove their belongings from the site.

- a. Items that a camper leaves behind will be deemed abandoned.
  - b. Requests for additional time or assistance to remove items will be evaluated for reasonableness and, if reasonable, accommodated to the extent practicable.
2. A separate and unclaimed portion of an otherwise occupied encampment will be treated as an unoccupied encampment per Section A above.

### C. Other Expedited Removals

1. The following types of encampments are subject to expedited removal even if the encampment is unoccupied:
  - a. An encampment in an area the public is not allowed to access at the time of removal, with clear signage to that effect.
  - b. An encampment in an area that has been clearly signed as specially off-limits to camping and subject to expedited removal.
  - c. An encampment that significantly disrupts a primary intended use of public property (e.g., blocking a doorway, on a sports field or court, or obstructing a large portion of a sidewalk).
  - d. An encampment that poses a significant risk of bodily injury (e.g., directly adjacent to vehicular traffic, requires walking across highway traffic to access).
  - e. An encampment that appears to have been entirely abandoned (e.g., no persons present and no indication anyone is likely to return for remaining items).
2. In an expedited removal, the notice specified in Section (A)(1) is not required. The City will otherwise follow the same clean-up procedures specified in this policy.

6.3 No part of this Encampment Removal and Cleanup Policy is intended to create any private or other cause of action.

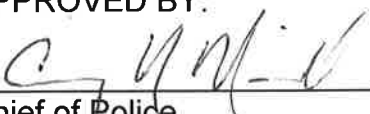
7.0 RESPONSIBILITIES

7.1 Departments are required to coordinate efforts to comply with this policy.

8.0 APPENDICES

Not applicable.

APPROVED BY:

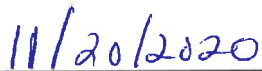
  
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Chief of Police

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Director of Parks and Recreation

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
City Attorney

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Director of Community and Economic Development

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
City Administrator (Interim)

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Date