

City of Portland | Executive Department

Danielle West, *Interim City Manager*



To: Mayor Snyder and Members of the Portland City Council

From: Danielle P. West, Interim City Manager

Date: May 12, 2023

Re: Encampment Removal and Remediation

In response to requests, and in follow-up to the May 9, 2023 Health and Human Services & Public Safety Committee meeting, we have prepared the following memo to detail the encampment policy guidelines, current encampment conditions, and timeline related to the scheduled removal and remediation of an encampment on the Bayside Trail.

The number of encampments in Portland is growing at a significant rate. While we are working on a number of long-term solutions to create housing and shelter capacity, these solutions will not be available immediately. In recognition of this, and although City ordinances prohibit camping in public areas, staff developed an implementation policy in July 2022 that includes a general “hands-off” approach when City-operated shelters are full as per federal case law.

As part of this “hands-off” approach, encampments are only removed if and when their presence or conditions create public health or safety hazards. The presence of hazards can be determined by calls for service and observations by staff and members of the public, as well as other criteria.

The encampment on the Bayside Trail presents significant health and safety hazards - to campers, the general public, the nearby business community, and City staff. Over the past month, despite multiple warnings that the encampment was scheduled for removal, it has grown in size. Trash receptacles placed onsite to assist campers in properly disposing of waste have not been effective in addressing the hazardous conditions.

As such, and after discussing the alternatives, risks, and necessity with the HHS & PS Committee, we have decided to move forward with the removal of this campsite. Although our policy requires only 24 hours notice prior to the removal of an encampment, we have provided additional notice in the hope that community partners’ outreach efforts may help campers in this transition.

Our scheduled removal timeline is as follows:

Date	Action
May 10 - May 16, 2023	Provide campers with verbal notice
May 10, 2023	Notify community partners and request an increase in outreach efforts
May 11 and 15, 2023	Post written notices of scheduled removal
May 16, 2023	Removal of encampment
May 16, 2023	Post site as an emphasis area
May 17, 2023 - ongoing	Site remediation and restoration

We recommend all unhoused individuals visit the Social Services Division at 39 Forest Avenue to learn about the resources available to them. For example, if unhoused individuals have a friend or family member they can stay with temporarily, we would be happy to pay for any associated transportation costs. In addition, by connecting with our social services staff, unhoused individuals can be directly notified when shelter beds become available.

We recognize that, due to a lack of shelter capacity, some people may have no alternative but to sleep outdoors. In those cases, we recommend that they do not place any tent, structure, or personal belongings on or near a public road or path, and keep their site small, clean, and safe.

In addition and as discussed at the recent HHS & PS Committee meetings, we are in the process of refining and improving our campsite removal policy by establishing an Encampment Removal Task Force. Led by Director Kristen Dow (Department of Health and Human Services), Chief Keith Gautreau (Fire Department) and Acting Chief Heath Gorham (Police Department), this task force will, among other things, work to coordinate outreach efforts to encampments well in advance of scheduled removal dates, facilitating a smoother transition and connection to services for unhoused individuals.

We remain committed to finding short- and long-term solutions to the many challenges facing our city and its residents. This week, the United States Department of Housing and Urban Development is visiting Portland to meet with City staff and community partners to learn more about our challenges and offer technical assistance. We look forward to providing you with additional updates as this process continues.