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# Standard Operating Procedures

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Homeless Encampment  
Clean-up Program

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Updated - August 24<sup>th</sup>, 2021

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## **Scope and Applicability**

The City of Tukwila has identified a number of distinct homeless encampment areas that pose serious public health and safety concerns for those living in and around them. Not only are they unfit for human habitation, but some of the individuals have been linked with illegal activity either as victims or as perpetrators. There have been repeated attempts to clean these areas but they were unsuccessful.

It is the intent of the City to preserve the health and provide for the safety of all city employees and members of the public who contact, or are affected by encampments. Camping in publicly owned or maintained areas, improved or unimproved, including but not limited to parks, trails, streets, underpasses and parking lots (hereinafter collectively referred to as "Public Property") is illegal in the City.

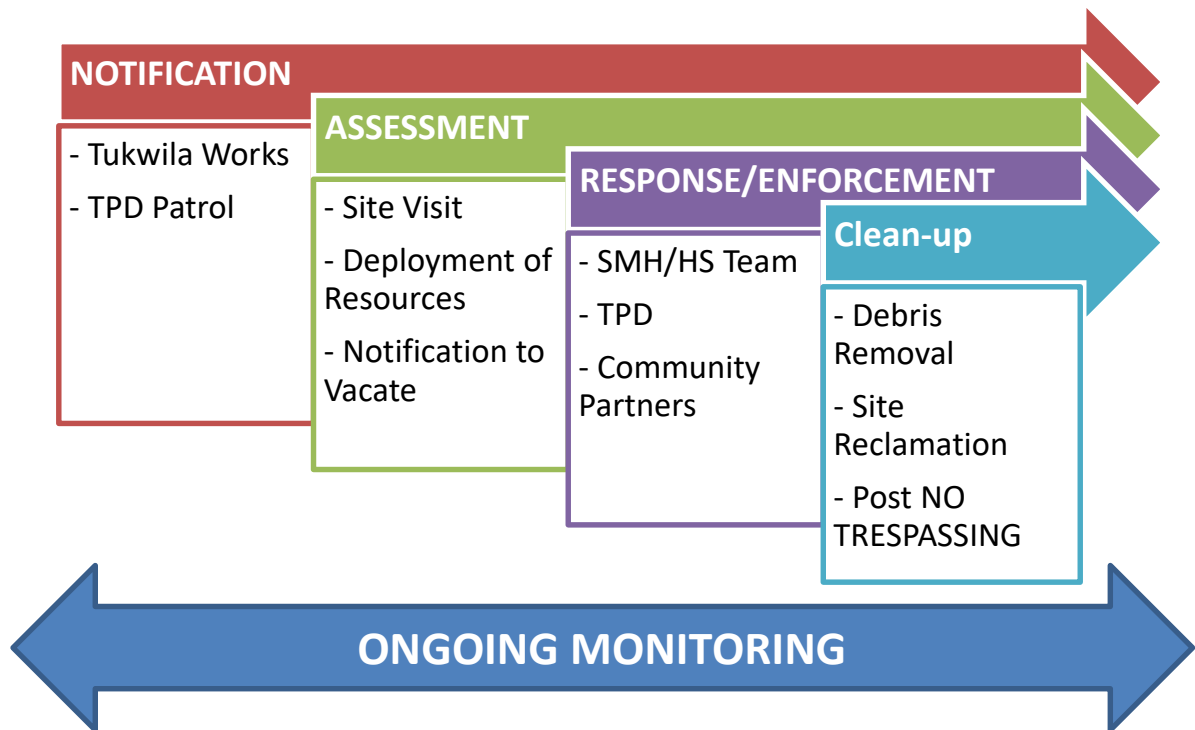
The monitoring, removal and clean-up of these areas continues to be an ongoing effort. Unfortunately, even with this level of effort, some sites continue to re-populate. It is imperative these sites are quickly cleaned before the size and severity increases. As such, the following standard operating procedures (SOPs) have been developed. Problem sites will be activated with positive activities and plans that will be tailored to the specific needs of each area. The end goal for all sites is safety and sustainability of clean-up.

The City's comprehensive plan for handling homeless encampments will include:

- Identification, assessment, response/enforcement, clean-up and monitoring of all encampment sites on City-owned and non-City-owned property.
- Identification of a management plan to keep "hot spot" sites clear from future activity, will include:
  - Partnerships with homeless service organizations and nonprofit organizations to help people gain access to housing, shelter, mental health or substance abuse treatment.
  - Build alliances with affordable housing providers and other organizations that serve homeless individuals and families.
- Provide guidelines or specifications in operations plans for the safe removal and disposal of biohazards in identified areas, and respectful consideration of the campers' personal items.

The success of the city's encampment clean-up process hinges on the joint collaboration of many groups including: Tukwila Human Services, Tukwila Police Department (TPD), Tukwila Fire Department, Sound Mental Health (SMH), Public Works Department (PW), Parks & Recreation, government partners (WSDOT), local shelters, community groups, local businesses and residents of the area.

## Encampment Response



### Notification

Concerned community members will report encampments through Tukwila Works or by calling the PD non-emergency number.

Either method of submission must include relevant information regarding the encampment such as:

- Date and time of observation
- Detailed description of encampment
- Immediate or adjacent address
- Number of individuals present

During normal patrol assignments, Tukwila Police Officers will also conduct visual scans of their surroundings and notify the police department detectives of identified sites along with any additional pertinent information gathered. When officers first contact the encampment, a case report will be taken. Day one of the process will be when officers first contact the location.

## **Assessment**

Officers will assess the reported site and provide the encampment information to the the Tukwila Co-Responder.

## **Response**

Following the assessment, officers will coordinate a visit to the encampment site with The Tukwila Co-Responder or representative from other organizations to the reported encampment site to assess the area and contact any individuals in residence. The individuals in need will be provided with resources and referrals for needed services such as housing, shelter, mental health or substance abuse treatment.

Once recourses have been offered and refused, individuals remaining after the assessment are reminded the area will be cleaned within the next 48 hours and all individuals will be required vacate the premises.

If unoccupied, and officers are unable to locate anyone at the encampment by day 6, it will be assumed that the property is abandoned, and the clean-up crew can move forward.

## **Clean-up**

At least 72 hours prior to clean-up activities, the City shall post a notice at the encampment area that contains the following information:

- Identification of the City as the agency responsible for the clean-up;
- Date the notice was given;
- Date or dates on which the clean-up will occur;
- Phone number for storage location. The storage location may be a local City facility or other local site as designated by the City;
- The items will be stored for a maximum of 70 days and if unclaimed within that time, will be disposed of by the City.

The public works will coordinate with officers to complete clean-up. Should an issue or emergency arise public works will contact the police department.

Prior to clean-up individuals will be given the opportunity to collect any and all of their belongings. The City shall follow the applicable provisions of RCW 63.21.060 and RCW 63.32.010 with respect to the acquisition of lost property found on publicly owned or maintained property. Trash, debris, waste, hazardous items, and other like material may be immediately removed and disposed of and is not subject to prior notice.

Personal property items that are not trash, contaminated, illegal, or hazardous shall be inventoried to include the date, location and brief description of the item that was placed in the bag. City staff should not open locked personal items of personal property, unless in their determination it is necessary to do so to protect public safety.

Once a property has been cleaned and cleared site hardening recommendations may be implemented. This may include **NO TRESPASSING** signs on the property.

### **Monitor (ongoing)**

Any homeless encampment area that has re-populated more than 3 times in the last year, would consider "Hot spot" sites. They will be monitored by TPD, City Staff, neighbors and community partners. Coordinated monitoring plans will be tailored to the specific needs of each site.

The City of Tukwila may deviate from these guidelines if the City determines that coordination with another jurisdiction on a specific clean-up activity is the best course of action under the circumstances.

### **Safety & Training**

Safety and appropriate training are critical requirements for Tukwila City staff or representatives from other organizations. City Staff/Representatives from other organizations shall comply with all safety rules and protocols required by the State of Washington.

## **Definitions**

**Homeless person:** is someone who lacks a fixed, regular, adequate nighttime residence, and is:

- living outdoors, on the streets, in a car
- Residing in a shelter or other temporary housing
- Couch surfing or staying with friends/extended family



**Encampment:** Locations throughout the City where homeless individuals set up tents, and other forms of makeshift sleeping and living areas. These areas are often unsafe and unsanitary.

**Human Services:** City staff whose responsibilities include the coordination of resources to address encampments, and formulating recommendations to address homeless encampments;

**Outreach:** The initial and most critical step in connecting or reconnecting an individual experiencing homelessness to needed health, mental health, recovery, social and housing services that involves the process of engagement, assessing needs, defining service goals or agreeing on a plan for delivering those services;

**Hot Spot Areas:** Any homeless encampment area that has re-populated more than 3 times in the preceding 12 months.

**Sound Mental Health:** King County's most comprehensive provider of mental health, substance abuse and behavioral health services.

## **Enforcement Teams and Duties**

### **Outreach Teams**

Sound Mental Health/Human Services: Make contact with individuals of encampments, providing resources and referrals for services.

### **Encampment Clean-up Crew**

Public Works & Parks and Recreation Department: Clean-up identified encampment sites when directed.

### **Tukwila Police Department**

Community Liaison Officer/Community Police Team Officer: Upon observation or receipt of a complaint of homeless encampments notify human services or SMH; assist in the removal of individuals from encampment sites if necessary.

## **Contacts**

### **Tukwila Police Department**

15005 Tukwila International Blvd.  
Tukwila, WA 98188  
206-433-1808

### **Tukwila Human Services**

6300 Southcenter Blvd  
Tukwila, WA 98188  
206-433-7180

### **Sound Mental Health**

6100 Southcenter Blvd  
Tukwila, WA 98188  
Phone:206-444-7800

### **Tukwila Public Works**

6300 Southcenter Blvd, #100  
Tukwila, WA 98188  
206-433-0179

### **Tukwila Parks and Recreation Department**

12424 42<sup>nd</sup> Ave S  
Tukwila, WA 98168  
206-768-0524

### **Tukwila Fire Department**

15447 65<sup>th</sup> Ave S.  
Tukwila, WA. 98188  
206-575-4404