

I. PURPOSE

This policy establishes procedures for the City of Allentown's response to outdoor encampments on city-owned property. It is the intent of this policy to balance the city's responsibility to maintain public health and safety with the compassionate treatment of individuals experiencing homelessness. This policy will be implemented only after other outreaches to connect unhoused residents to services and improved lodging have failed to inspire unhoused persons to leave dangerous areas. The procedures outlined in this policy are intended to be read and construed narrowly.

This policy should be viewed in the broad context of a city government that is aware of its unhoused population, that makes an effort to reach out and interact before individuals have established large encampments and that makes a meaningful effort to help connect unsheltered people to services.

No unhoused person will be removed without being offered alternative housing or shelter. City and other outreach personnel will help unhoused persons mitigate risk during the processes outlined.

II. SCOPE

This policy applies to all outdoor encampments and temporary shelters on City of Allentown property, including parks, rights-of-way, and other public city-owned spaces. It does not apply to County, State or Federal public property, or private property. For the purposes of this policy, an encampment is a grouping of five tents/structures or more

III. LEGAL FRAMEWORK

Camping and the construction of temporary structures on City property is prohibited by City ordinance. This policy is intended as guidance for City responses that balance enforcement authority with compassionate treatment of human beings. Nothing in this policy shall prevent or limit City Administration from responding to emergency situation. Emergencies are defined as life-safety occurrences such as situations involving violence, imminent weather events, fires or natural disasters.

IV. DEFINITIONS

City: The City of Allentown, in both city government as well as physical geography.

Encampment: Temporary outdoor accommodation including tents, tarps, or other structures in which people are living that are not meant for long-term human habitation. An encampment for the purpose of this policy is any group of 5 or more such structures.

Private Property: Any real property that is owned by an individual, business, or nonprofit organization, including but not limited to business parking lots and private residences.

Public Property:

V. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

City of Allentown:

- Manages city-owned property and infrastructure
- Protects public health and safety
- Coordinates with service providers and Lehigh County
- Provides information about available resources

Lehigh County and Community-Based Organizations:

- Provide housing, shelter, and human services
- Conduct outreach and case management
- Deliver social services and support programs

The city does not provide housing, shelter, or relocation assistance.

VI. RESPONSE PROCEDURES:

Parks

Camping and temporary shelters are prohibited in City parks. City parks close at dusk except during permitted events.

Action: Encampments in parks will be removed immediately upon discovery.

Process: The first responding City agency must communicate with the Managing Director, Public Works, APD, Fire and Health Departments that the City has become aware of the encampment, its size and location. The Managing Director will notify City Council. The Health Bureau will coordinate with service providers and provide information about available resources to individuals present.

General Procedures:

If after repeated outreach and coordination with appropriate provider agencies, unhoused persons do not voluntarily relocate, and if the encampment scores more than 20 points in the risk assessment rubric (exhibit A) for evacuation, then the encampment will be posted by appropriate personnel accompanied by the City's unhoused persons coordinator.

Unhoused persons residing in these areas will be given three days to mitigate minor items such as removal of accumulated trash,

Postings will be in English and Spanish and make clear the timeline and process for evacuation that unhoused persons should follow. A copy of the posting signage is attached (exhibit B)

Obvious trash may be removed at any time by any responding City or outreach personnel

Emergency Hazard Encampments

Encampments that create immediate, imminent danger to occupants or the public as determined by the Managing Director.

For illustrative purposes, common sense examples of "imminent danger" include active fire, active violence on site, presence in a flood plain when heavy rains and flooding are expected, or

Action: Immediate removal with Police Department and Fire Department authority after notification of relevant City agencies.

Process: The first responding City agency must communicate with the Managing Director, Public Works, APD, Fire and Health of the encampment, its size and location. The Managing Director will notify City Council. Service provider notification and resource information provided when feasible given emergency circumstances will be performed by the Health Bureau.

High-Risk Location Encampments

Encampments in high-risk locations as determined by rubric (attachment A)

Notice Period: 30 days prior to cleanup

Process:

Process: The first responding City agency must communicate with the Managing Director, Public Works, APD, Fire and Health of the encampment, its size and location. The Managing Director will notify City Council. The Health Bureau will coordinate with service providers and provide information about available resources to individuals present.

Rubric For Response

Other City Property

Encampments on other city property not meeting the above criteria.

Notice Period: 30 days prior to cleanup.

Process:

The first responding City agency must communicate with the Managing Director, Public Works, APD, Fire and Health of the encampment, its size and location.

- The City's Unhoused Services Coordinator will coordinate with service providers in advance
- Information about available resources will be posted at the site
- Abandoned tents and personal property will be removed. Obvious garbage will be removed, Care will be taken for clear personal effects to be defined as ID's, citizenship or legal documents, cell phones to be retained for a period of thirty days and be taken into City custody under the care of the unsheltered persons coordinator.
- Occupied sites may remain if health and safety standards are maintained
- If the encampment is determined to be a public health or public safety threat, all property will be removed.

Authority: Determination of public health or public safety threats is made jointly by the Chief of Police and the Director of Health.

Re-Encampments – Individuals reestablishing in previously cleared and posted Emergency Hazard or High- Risk areas will be asked to vacate immediately by law enforcement.

VII. COORDINATION

The City will coordinate with the following entities when responding to encampments:

- Lehigh County Department of Human Services
- Allentown Commission on Homelessness
- HUD Continuum of Care service providers

- Community-based organizations providing homeless services
- Faith-based organizations as appropriate

VIII. REPORTING AND OVERSIGHT

Biweekly Reporting: City administration will report to City Council on a biweekly basis on encampment response activities, including:

- Number and locations of encampments addressed
- Notice periods provided
- Service provider coordination and reports
- Outcomes and referrals

IX. IMPLEMENTATION

This policy is effective immediately and supersedes any previous informal practices or procedures related to encampment response.

All City departments involved in encampment response will implement this policy in accordance with their respective operational capabilities and applicable collective bargaining agreements.

This administrative policy may be enhanced, amended, modified, or revoked at any time at the Mayor's discretion.