

# Encampment Prioritization and Community Responsiveness



**SEATTLE**

## **4TH FIRE IN MONTH AT SEATTLE HOMELESS CAMP**

The Jose Rizal encampment is just one of 400 unsanctioned encampments in Seattle.

# Prioritization Process

- City finds out about an encampment
- We inspect the encampment
- We send outreach
- We apply situation criteria
- We apply prioritization criteria
- We clean up

# City Finds Out About an Encampment

- The Customer Service Bureau received 1,444 complaints about encampments in the last six weeks (an annualized rate of 12,500 per year).
- At any one time, we are tracking roughly 400 potential encampment sites.
- From July to December of 2017, we removed 97 encampments.

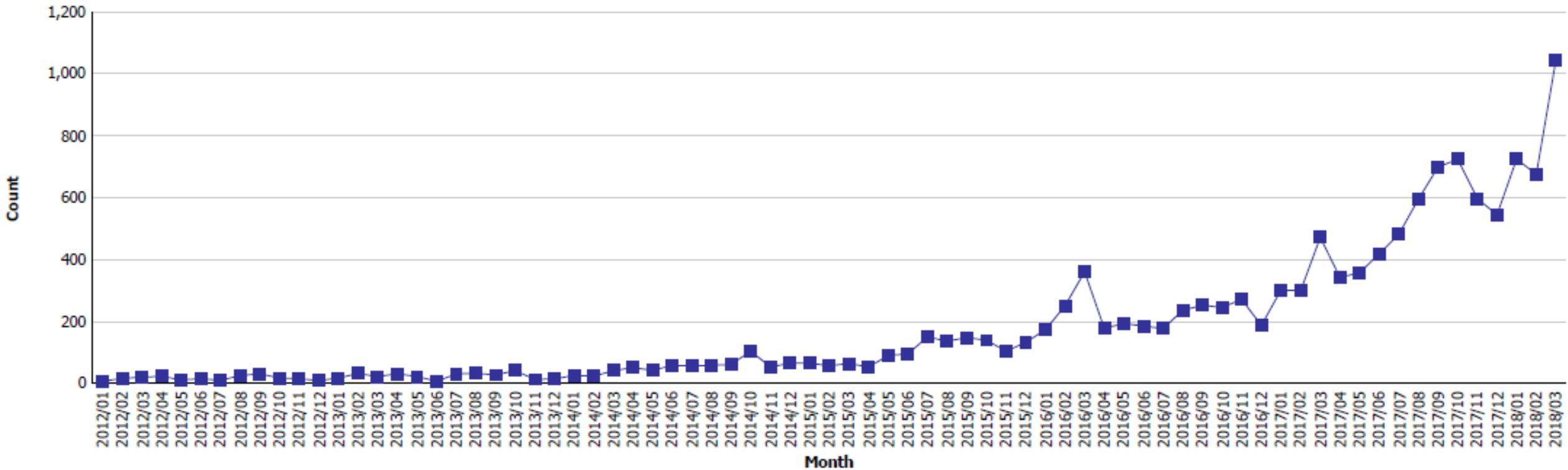
## Unauthorized Camping Service Requests Received by CSB

Feb 15, 2018 To Mar 29, 2018

	Count
EAST	94
No Geo Area Assigned	185
NORTH	567
SOUTH	101
SOUTHWEST	43
WEST	454
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,444</b>

Precinct	Location	SR #	Created Date	Nature of Inquiry
EAST	1000 CHERRY ST, SEATTLE, WA 98104	18-00038142	2/27/18	Homeless tent
	1001 S WELLER ST, SEATTLE, WA 98104	18-00033257	2/20/18	Tent encampment and illegal dumping.
	1030 S MAIN ST, SEATTLE, WA 98104	18-00044017	3/7/18	Illegal encampment
	1100 POPLAR PL S, SEATTLE, WA 98144	18-00043137	3/6/18	This encampment had two propane tanks explode. The Fire Dept had to put that out. Then they brought in more propane tanks and a gas can, and the gas can exploded. An employee of an area business put that out. In addition to the hypodermic needles, human poop, open drug use, various trash, and knives being brandished in an area where children congregate, this is getting increasingly dangerous.
		18-00037706	2/27/18	Encampment with uncapped needles
	1103 POPLAR PL S, SEATTLE, WA 98144	18-00034626	2/21/18	Homeless encampment with open drug use, knives brandished, and hypodermic needles dumped. Right next to a recreation facility commonly used by children.
	1110 S DEARBORN ST, SEATTLE, WA 98144	18-00033467	2/20/18	Trash, abandoned belongings, clothes, blankets , carats, needles
	1127 POPLAR PL S, SEATTLE, WA 98144	18-00045343	3/9/18	A lot of garbage and needles was dumped on the back porch of our office located at 1131 Poplar Pl S also homeless people make fire overnight on the back porch of our office twice during the last week also metal box was broken on our dump truck Isuzu and one battery was stolen also homeless people activity growing up behind the fence next door to our office.
	1121 S MAIN ST, SEATTLE, WA 98104	18-00033257	2/20/18	Tent encampment and illegal dumping.

# Encampment Complaints Received by Customer Service Bureau 2012-2018 by Month



# We Inspect the Encampment

- We review reports from all sources to choose where to conduct inspections.
- Field coordinators conduct inspections and document sites.
- Sites without active encampments but with trash or garbage are referred for illegal dumping abatement.
- Encampment sites are prioritized.

# We Apply Situation Criteria

- Is the encampment a present emergency?
  - Significant risk of serious injury to unsheltered person or others
- Is the encampment a present obstruction?
  - Prevents the intended use of a public facility
- We often provide 72 hours notice for hazards and obstructions, even though we don't have to.



# We Apply Prioritization Criteria

5.1.3 The following criteria, which have no relative priority, shall be considered when prioritizing encampments for removal:

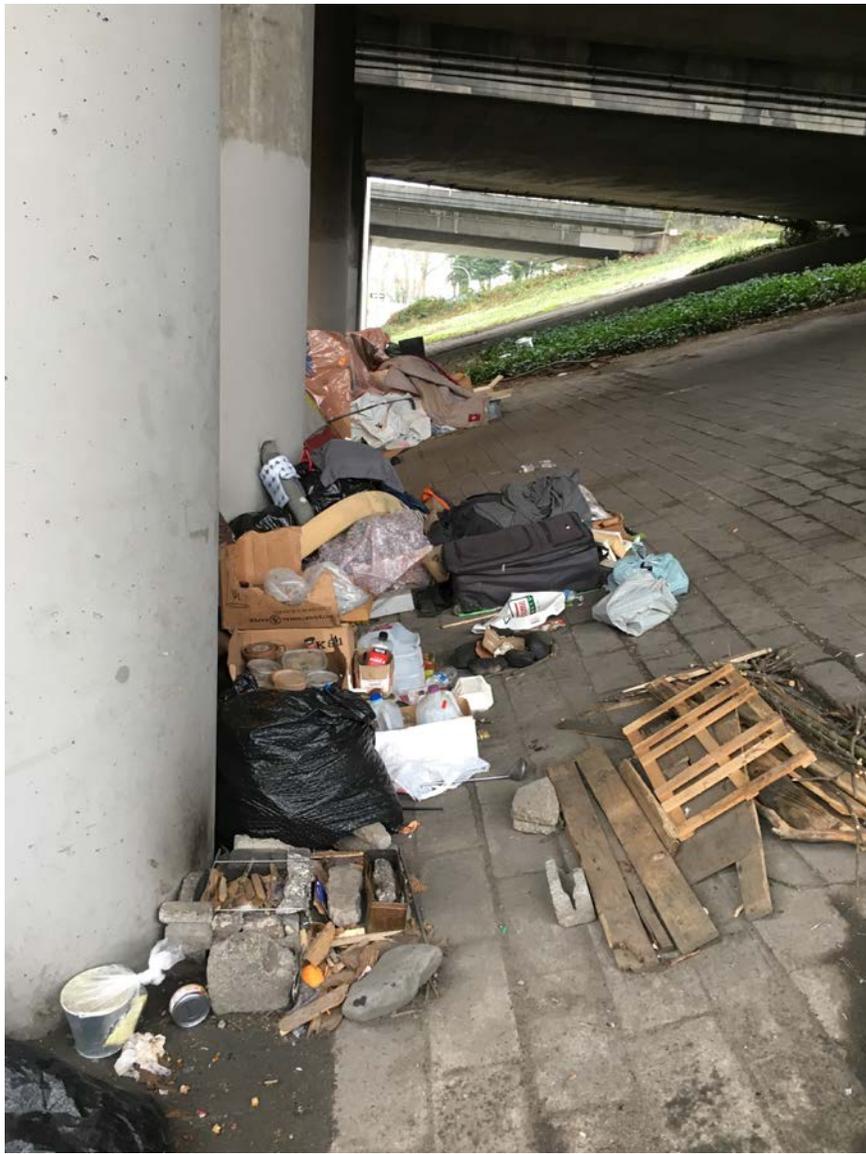
- (1) objective hazards such as moving vehicles and steep slopes;
- (2) criminal activity beyond illegal substance abuse;
- (3) quantities of garbage, debris, or waste;
- (4) other active health hazards to occupants or the surrounding neighborhood;
- (5) difficulty in extending emergency services to the site;
- (6) imminent work scheduled at the site for which the encampment will pose an obstruction;
- (7) damage to the natural environment of environmentally critical areas; and
- (8) the proximity of homeless individuals to uses of special concern including schools or facilities for the elderly.

Hazards –  
Such as  
Moving  
Vehicles



# Quantities of garbage, Debris or waste





Other Health Hazard to  
Occupants or Surrounding  
Neighborhood

# Difficulty Extending Emergency Services



# Community Responsiveness

- Person-to-person contact for reports to the Customer Service Bureau
- Automated responses for text reporting
- Meetings with interest groups as appropriate
- People who report encampments are rarely satisfied with the speed of the City's response
- People who report encampments are frequently frustrated by the pace at which they return

# MDAR Review

Council Green Sheet 240-1-C-2

## Council's Ask:

“[T]he Council intends that the Executive shall review MDAR 17-01 and FAS 17-01 protocols to improve the unauthorized encampment removal process and reduce harm to unsheltered individuals and provide a report ....

Recommendations for changes to the existing policies, proposing new policies, or legislation should also consider input from the Advisory Committee on Implementation of Rules of Removing Unsanctioned Homeless Encampments and the Office of Civil Rights' encampment monitoring reports.”

GS 240-1-C-2

# Our Review of the MDARs

- Reviewed rules which are most impactful to people living in encampments
- Organized our review by section of FAS Rule 17-01
- Identified gaps in FAS Rule 17-01
- Recommended changes
- Are implementing most changes immediately, in the spirit of continuous improvement.

# Prioritizing Encampments for Removal

FAS Rule 17-01 5.0

- Rule provides guideline for prioritization:
  - moving vehicles and steep slopes;
  - criminal activity beyond illegal substance abuse;
  - quantities of garbage, debris, or waste; other active health hazards to occupants or the surrounding neighborhood;
  - difficulty in extending emergency services to the site;
  - imminent work scheduled at the site for which the encampment will pose an obstruction; and
  - proximity of homeless individuals to uses of special concern including schools or facilities for the elderly

# Issues with Prioritization

- Criteria still require the team to exercise discretion when prioritizing their work
- Certain community members have also expressed frustration with persistent encampments that do not qualify as a high priority
- The rules do not prioritize natural areas that are not designated critical areas (e.g. some park natural areas)
- Sequencing cleanups with scheduled infrastructure work has been complicated

# NOTICE REQUIREMENTS, ALTERNATIVE SHELTER, AND OUTREACH FOR ENCAMPMENT REMOVALS

FAS Rules 17-01 6.0, 7.0, 8.0

- Rules require:
  - Notice to be placed on or near each tent or structure identifying the day the notice was posted, the removal date, the time range in which removal will commence; where personal property will be stored; how personal property may be claimed; and contact information for an outreach provider that can provide shelter alternatives.
  - Notices shall be posted no fewer than 72 hours before an encampment removal.
  - The City must offer alternative locations for individuals in an encampment or identify available housing or other shelter for encampment occupants.
  - Prior to the removal, outreach personnel must visit an encampment at least once and shall be present at the commencement of removal activities.

# Issues with Notice, Providing Alternatives, and Outreach

- The Navigation Team is meeting or exceeding the advanced notice required by the rules. The median advanced notice is 5 days
- The Navigation Team is also exceeding the minimum requirements for safe alternatives. While the rule requires the City to offer available housing *or other shelter*, the practice of the Navigation Team has been to offer 24/7 shelter to individuals living in encampments
- Low vacancy rates and limited availability for safe alternatives have slowed the pace of encampment removals

# Storage of Personal Belongings

## Retrieval of Personal Belongings

FAS Rule 17-01 11.0, 12.0

- Rules require:
  - The City must store all personal property when removing obstructions, immediate hazards, or encampments.
    - The City is not required to store property that is hazardous
  - Personal property is stored for at least 70 days at a location commonly used by the City for storing property.
  - The City shall post an encampment site with a notice if personal property has been removed from the encampment.
  - The City must return personal belongings the next business day after someone calls to claim their property

# Issues with Storage of Personal Belongings

## Retrieval of Personal Belongings

- Notices at encampments direct people to the Navigation Team staff member charged with storage management
- The City's Office for Civil Rights has noted this rule assumes people have access to phones or have adequate minutes to make the calls
- Requiring delivery within 24 hours (next business day) may be overly restrictive to property owner

# Transparency

FAS Rule 17-01 10

- Rule provides:
  - Post cleanup notices
  - Posting of encampment removals on website: [www.homelessness.seattle.gov](http://www.homelessness.seattle.gov)
- Council has requested weekly pre-cleanup reports

Location	FAS 17-01 Hazard/Obstruction	Hazards such as moving vehicles	Criminal activity beyond illegal substance abuse	Quantities of garbage, debris, or waste	Other health hazards to occupants or surrounding neighborhood	Difficulty in extending emergency services to site	Imminent work scheduled at the site for which the encampment will pose an obstruction	Damage to the natural environment or environmentally critical areas	Proximity to uses of special concern including schools or facilities for elderly	PRIORITIZATION NOTES	Department (s) Input
Gasworks Park	Yes	No	No	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	No	No	Encampment is located within the Gasworks Park “barn” structure. Living structures are sited within restricted areas, various platform levels, on/under/between levels of piping-- all of which present hazards to occupants and people utilizing the park space. Parks has scheduled contracted work to repair and remove portions of piping and cannot proceed until encampment is removed. Additionally, the encampment is in very close proximity to picnic and play areas, which presents special concern given the waste impacts stemming from encampment. Less than one-dozen living structures on site. Site could be classified as an obstruction and a hazard, however encampment was given more than 72-hour notice and received repeated outreach, with offers of services and safer shelter.	FAS/Parks

# Emphasis Areas

FAS Rule 17-01 13

- Rule provides:
  - The City may declare up to 10 emphasis areas only after the City has identified each area, removed an encampment, and installed signage designating the area as encampment-prohibited

# Issues with Emphasis Areas

- Use of emphasis areas has had varying effectiveness
- Emphasis areas are to be inspected daily, which has been impractical
- When encampments return to an emphasis area, the City utilizes the protocols for regular encampment cleanups

# Removing Obstructions and Immediate Hazard Encampments

FAS Rule 17-01 4.0

- Rule provides:
  - Obstructions and immediate hazard encampments (as defined in FAS 17-01) may be removed immediately
  - However, the City shall post a notice of removal, store personal property, and provide for its recovery

# Immediate Hazards and Obstructions

- The City has exercised this authority in only 11% of encampment removals of the last six months
- The City has removed encampments that posed obvious hazards and obstructions to public use
  - Alaskan Way Viaduct – completely blocking sidewalk, dangerously close to vehicular traffic
- City must be able to act immediately for safety reasons and when encampment is preventing the use of property as intended (sports fields and sidewalks)

# Issues Not Addressed by the Rules

- Fencing
  - May be ineffective to prevent camping
  - Prevents legitimate use of public land
- In the fall of 2018, City Council set criteria for use of fences:
  - The area is being fenced in response to objective hazards such as moving vehicles, pedestrian obstructions, or steep slopes;
  - The area is being fenced to protect a City-or-State-owned roadway or other infrastructure.
  - The area is being fenced to prevent damage to an environmentally critical area;
  - The area is being fenced for imminent City or state work scheduled at the site when an encampment would impede the work; or
  - The area is one of ten “Emphasis Areas” as defined by the Department of Finance and Administrative Services Encampment Rule (FAS 17-01).

# Recommendations for Change

- Develop protocols for sequencing encampment cleanups and infrastructure maintenance work
- Continue development of quantitative prioritization
- Memorialize current practices around phone number to call and opportunities to retrieve property. Continue to identify alternatives.
- Modify rules to require the City to be ready to deliver personal belongings within one business day but allow schedule flexibility to accommodate owner's needs.
- Develop written policies around fencing and other infrastructure that deters encampments
- Correct typos