

A Coordinated & Compassionate Response to Unsheltered Homelessness in Saint Paul



Every person living unsheltered in Saint Paul is a member of this community and deserves dignity, compassion, and respect – and a genuine connection to shelter, treatment, and housing that an encampment can never provide. After years of sustained outreach and a comprehensive assessment of conditions, the City of Saint Paul will close encampments citywide. The first closure will take place at Pig's Eye Park on August 5, 2026, with the remaining sites following in sequence.

How a Coordinated Transition Unfolds, Step by Step

1

Plan and Coordinate

Before any activity begins on site, the City works with Ramsey County, service providers, and community partners to identify available shelter, housing, and treatment resources; assign clear roles across agencies; and establish operational and communication procedures.



2

Conduct Outreach

For several weeks ahead of each closure, City and County teams meet with residents one-on-one to build trust, assess needs, connect them to shelter and services, assist with coordinated entry, replace essential documents, and offer transportation.



3

Transition and Restore

Staff from multiple departments support residents as they leave, address immediate health and safety needs, and — once the site is vacated — remove hazards and restore the public space for community use.



4

Continue Support

Outreach continues after each closure for residents not yet connected to services. Partners follow up, re-engage as needed, and review outcomes to strengthen future transitions.

Why the City Is Acting: A Systemic Crisis with Local Consequences

Homelessness is a systemic challenge, not only a municipal one.

Cities do not operate the systems that resolve homelessness. Building housing, providing health care, ensuring behavioral health treatment, and delivering human services are primarily the responsibilities of county, state, and federal government. The management of encampments is not a core function of city government — and no city has the resources or the mandate to end a national housing and public-health crisis on its own.

Saint Paul is choosing to act on what it can control.

The City can coordinate its partners, connect residents to available services, and ensure that public spaces remain safe for everyone who uses them. It cannot, and does not claim to, solve unsheltered homelessness alone. That work requires the sustained commitment of every level of government — and it is the reason the City is pursuing a long-term, regional approach alongside this response.

Conducting these transitions well before the onset of winter gives residents the best possible opportunity to connect with shelter and services before falling temperatures make outdoor living significantly more dangerous.

How the City Conducts Outreach: The Four E's

Police respond to calls for service at the encampments just as they do for any other such call. When it comes to the final stages of clearing, they will attempt to work with people before resorting to enforcement action, as enforcement is always the last resort.

Engage: Make contact with the people living at each site, learning who is there and what they need so that outreach can meet their specific circumstances.

Educate: Inform residents early and repeatedly about the upcoming closure, their options, and resources.

Encourage: Return to the site consistently to build trust and remove the barriers that keep residents from accepting help.

Enforce: As a last resort we will enforce city ordinances, only after sustained outreach.



Assistance does not end on the day of a closure. Outreach, follow-up, and collaboration to find paths to sobriety and stable housing continue afterward. For housing or supportive services, contact Ramsey County's single point of entry at **651-266-1050, available 24/7**. Learn more at **stpaul.gov/unsheltered-resources**.



Why Encampments Are Not a Safe or Sustainable Environment

While the City agrees that closures alone will not end homelessness — only housing and health systems beyond any city's control can do that — the question before us is whether allowing an encampment to remain in place is a safe or sustainable alternative for the people living there. Remaining in a public park overnight is already prohibited under city ordinance; setting that aside, the evidence is clear that it is not.

Fire Marshal Assessment

A formal fire-safety assessment documented conditions the Fire Marshal characterized as significant life-safety risks to residents and responders alike:

- Open burn pits, used for heat and cooking, within feet of tents.
- Propane tanks, gas-powered generators, and charcoal grills in direct contact with, or within arm's reach of, highly flammable nylon and polyester shelters.
- No fire extinguishers and no source of potable drinking water anywhere on site.
- Tents pitched close together, so that a fire in one can spread rapidly to others.

The assessment noted that cold weather drives greater reliance on open flame for heat — compounding the risk precisely when residents are most exposed. A cluttered, inaccessible site also endangers the firefighters and medics who respond.

What Residents Can Expect Throughout the Process

- **Their belongings.** Every effort is made not to separate people from their property. City crews confirm that items are no longer wanted before anything is discarded.
- **Culturally specific services.** Outreach and resources are provided in multiple languages, including Hmong and Spanish, with additional supports added as needs are identified.
- **Health and behavioral health support.** Residents are connected to food, water, and essential supplies, and to health care, behavioral health, substance-use treatment, and financial assistance.



SAINT PAUL
MINNESOTA

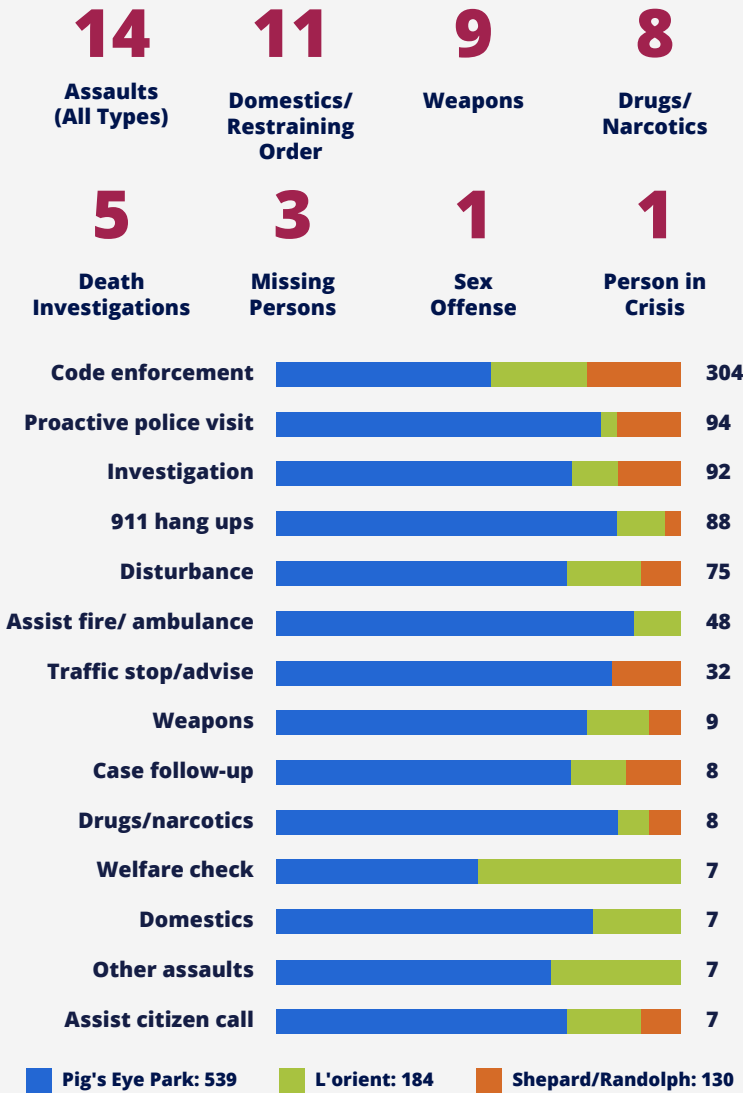
Safety & Inspections Call Center
651-266-8989. 7:30 a.m. - 4:30 p.m.
Monday - Friday

853 First Responder Calls for Service (July 1, 2025–July 6, 2026)

The figures below reflect incidents reported at the encampment. They do not describe everyone living there.

101 fire and EMS incidents in a single year at one site — **81 medical emergencies and 20 fire incidents**. That is a fire or medical emergency roughly **every three to four days**.

Total Calls Comparison Between Three Major Encampments in Saint Paul



Guiding Principles: Safety, Stability, and Dignity



SAFETY

The City's first responsibility is to reduce the dangerous conditions that put unsheltered residents at risk, connect them with safer alternatives, and protect neighbors, businesses, and first responders. Every transition is planned and carried out to keep both residents and staff safe.



STABILITY

Homelessness is rarely a single problem. It intersects with housing instability, behavioral health, medical needs, and financial barriers. The City meets residents where they are and helps them navigate all barriers — personal identification, transportation — that stand between them and lasting stability.



DIGNITY

Leaving an encampment is disruptive and difficult. City staff and partners approach every interaction with patience, empathy, and respect, recognizing that each person's circumstances and readiness for change are different. The goal is to minimize unnecessary disruption while addressing conditions that are genuinely unsafe.