

Camp Hope news update Jan. 19

New encampment count numbers show site continues to shrink

As part of work to permanently close the Camp Hope encampment, a new on-site snapshot count shows continued progress in shrinking the site. The previous count was conducted the week of Dec. 12. The new count completed the week of Jan. 9 tallied:

- 138 estimated* people (compared to 198 people the week of Dec. 12)
- 93 tents/structures (compared to 120 the week of Dec. 12)
- 20 RVs* (compared to 27 the week of Dec. 12) Since the count, 6 RVs were towed from the site on Jan. 18.
- 4 vehicles (compared to 5 the week of Dec. 12)
- 8 sites tagged for removal (13 sites were tagged the week of Dec. 12)

** Some people may be off site working, receiving treatment, etc. and were not counted (residents may return within 7 days), so this number could increase slightly. Those individuals will still receive the services they need to secure more permanent, improved housing options and services.*

This is good progress compared to an initial 467-person count this fall and an estimated 600+ people on site this summer. A new series of drone photos of the site also shows fewer tents and people on the property.

While this is encouraging news, more work lies ahead to ensure residents get the support and best chance to be successful moving inside. Some of the more easily placed residents have moved off site or found other lodging options, while some of those remaining may have multiple challenges or barriers to permanent housing. Outreach groups will do intensive work to find the best options among the available housing for these high acuity individuals.

The new on-site snapshot was conducted by i2- Strategies, working with Empire Health Foundation, who has a contract with the state Department of Commerce to conduct outreach at Camp Hope. New counts will take place bi-weekly going forward to track progress.

More Camp Hope residents transition to Catalyst program

As of Jan. 9, 51 people had moved from Camp Hope into the new Catalyst emergency supportive housing facility. People from Camp Hope are being gradually moved into the building to allow for smooth transitions; it can house at least 100 people at full capacity. Transitions have been slowed slightly during construction work on two floors; one floor has been completed and another is underway to allow more people to continue to move to the site.

In addition to emergency housing, Catalyst participants receive case management, employment and behavioral health services, all aimed at creating pathways to stable housing after their stay at Catalyst. The Catalyst project is run by Catholic Charities Eastern Washington and was funded with \$15 million in state Right of Way Safety Initiative dollars as part of efforts to close the encampment site.

Education/employment opportunities underway for encampment residents

Outreach workers are providing information and developing employment training programs for people living at Camp Hope as part of the outreach and services to help set residents up for success as they find housing and leave the site. Initial work is underway, including two information sessions have been held to gauge interest and needs among the residents.

Part of the work planned by i2-strategies, a consulting firm contracted by WSDOT to provide homeless services support, will help encampment residents find work in fields that prepare individuals for state employment opportunities, including pre-apprentice programs and/or other local employers. Local employers and employment agencies also have been contacted to identify other employment opportunities and the skills of encampment residents will be assessed to assist in identifying potential candidates. Employment can be a key component in finding, applying for and remaining in housing and these efforts are part of the overall work to find better options for the encampment residents and close the site.

Many types of housing options still a key need

While work continues to develop housing options, information about all shelter/housing options – and transportation to these sites – is shared daily with Camp Hope residents. The Right of Way Safety Initiative funding requires an offer of shelter/housing that is “meaningfully better” than their current situation be made to everyone at the encampment as part of the work to close the site. The most successful housing and homelessness efforts – nationally and elsewhere in Washington – include the availability of different housing options. A variety of available housing options is ideal for moving a large encampment because of mental health, domestic violence security, privacy and other concerns that prevent some residents from functioning in a congregate shelter.

The housing need also exceeds just the Camp Hope encampment making the housing need even more critical. The most recent point-in-time count by the city of Spokane counted 1,757 people experiencing homelessness throughout Spokane County on a single night in February, with 823 individuals living outside. A nationally recognized supplemental state system that cross matches homeless data from multiple assistance

programs finds a comprehensive count of more than 5,200 people experiencing homelessness (living in a shelter or unsheltered) in Spokane County.

Sign-up for future email updates

If you would like to receive regular communication about what's happening at Camp Hope, please sign up for our email

listserv: https://public.govdelivery.com/accounts/WADOT/subscriber/new?topic_id=WADOT_706

Camp Hope and the State Right of Way Safety Initiative

As part of continued work to close the Camp Hope encampment, WSDOT and its state, local and nonprofit partners continue to make visible progress stabilizing Camp Hope as part of the state Right of Way Safety Initiative. This joint effort includes work from WSDOT, the state Department of Commerce, the Washington State Patrol and on-the-ground resource provider Empire Health Foundation (working under a contract with Commerce) and other partners, who are all working toward the shared community goal of closing the encampment.