

Camp Hope news update May 25

Camp Hope encampment numbers continue to decline in new on-site snapshot count

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 completed the week of May 15. The new count, completed May 24, tallied:

- 20 estimated* people (compared to 21 people the week of May 15)
- 15 tents/structures (compared to 16 the week of May 15)
- 5 RVs* (same as the week of May 15)
- 0 vehicles (same as the week of May 15)
- 0 sites tagged for removal (same as the week of May 15)

* 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 continued decline is a sign of moving in the right direction compared to an initial 467-person count this fall and the estimated 600+ people living on site in the summer of 2022.

This is the latest independent count conducted by i2-Strategies, working with Empire Health Foundation, as part of a contract with the state Department of Commerce to conduct outreach at Camp Hope. The counts take place weekly as we continue downsizing and nearing the closure of Camp Hope.

The first count, during the week of Dec. 12, identified 198 residents, 120 tents/structures, 27 RVs and 5 vehicles in the encampment. The overall number of people living at the encampment has decreased 90 percent from the Dec. 12 count to the May 24 tally. Overall, this is a 96 percent decrease in population since the initial needs assessment identified 467 people at the site.

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.

Closure of Camp Hope nearing

Much work remains to permanently close Camp Hope and move the remaining 20 individuals into permanent housing. State partners, WSDOT, Department of Commerce and Washington State Patrol, along with Empire Health Foundation, the service provider contracted by Commerce through the state's Right of Way Initiative, are on target to

offer the final occupants a stable housing option by the end of June. Once the remaining individuals have been moved into housing and off the site, mitigation and cleanup of the site will begin.

Catalyst program remains at capacity

As of April 25, the Catalyst emergency supportive housing program reached capacity with 93 individuals. As individuals move out of Catalyst into permanent housing, additional referrals from Camp Hope continue to be received.

In addition to emergency housing, Catalyst participants receive meal and laundry services, case management, employment and behavioral health services, all aimed at creating pathways to stable housing after their stay at Catalyst. Medical providers are on-site weekly helping participants address emergent health needs, and project staff are working with participants to plan for longer range wellness. Recovery groups and addiction education sessions are also being facilitated on-site each week, in addition to provision of outpatient substance use disorder treatment services.

Catalyst 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, which funded site acquisition, building rehab and first-year program operations.

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 state 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 Spokane 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 2,390 people experiencing homelessness throughout Spokane County on a single night in February 2023, an increase of 36% compared to the point-in-time count conducted in 2022. Of the 2,390 people experiencing homelessness in the most recent count, 955 individuals were identified as living outside, a 16% increase from 2022.

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.