

Encampment Response Procedure Overview

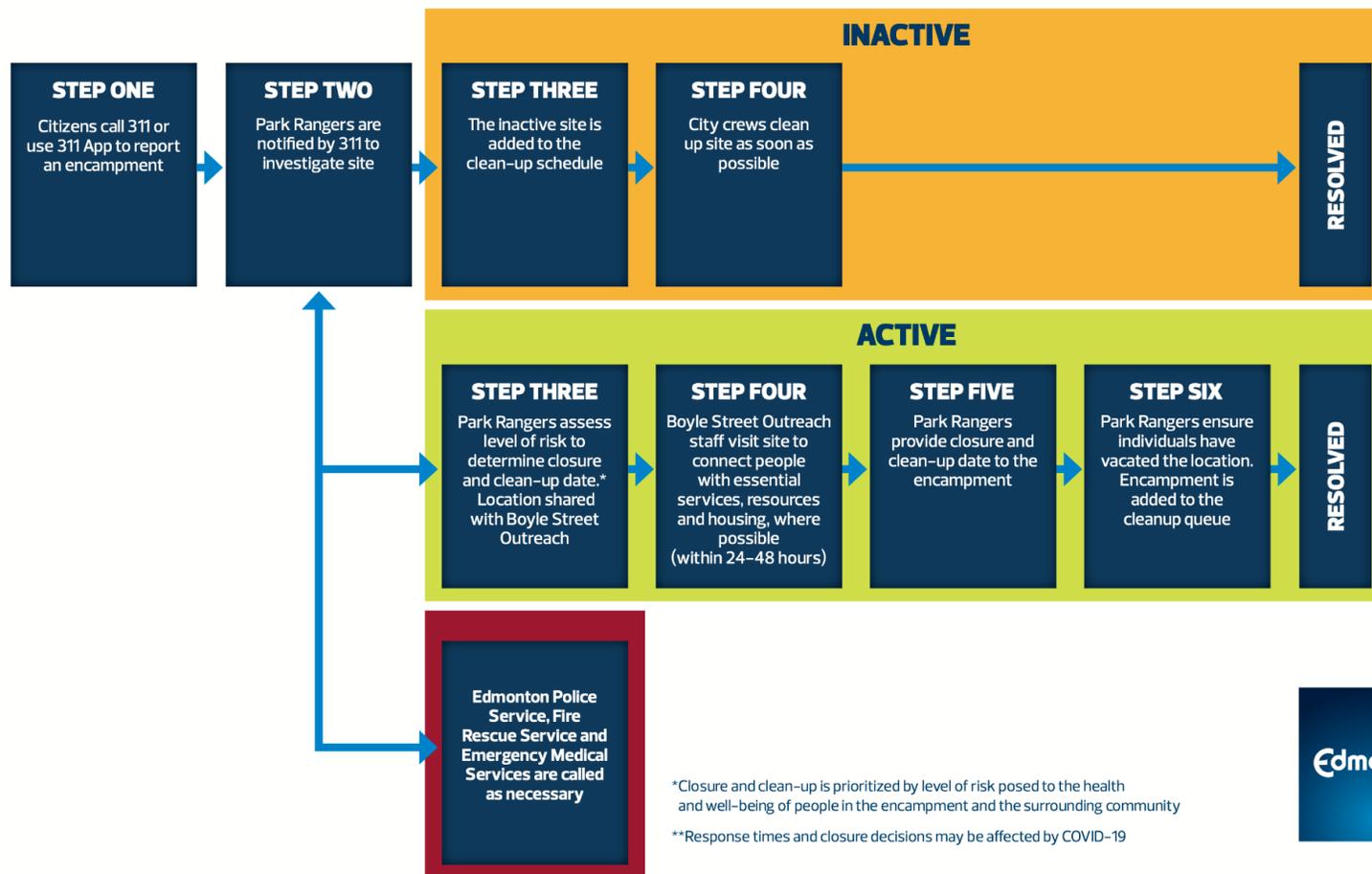
The City of Edmonton responds to encampments on public land year-round in partnership with homeless-serving agencies including Homeward Trust, Boyle Street Community Services, and Bissell Centre, and Edmonton Police Service through the Encampment Response Team. The team is made aware of encampment locations through proactive scouting by street outreach teams who assist those sleeping rough with connecting to services, including housing, and by citizens through 311. In 2020, the Encampment Response Team responded to 4,054 encampment complaints, compared to 4,138 in 2019. A total of 1,477 encampments were cleaned-up by the City in 2020.

Park rangers investigate encampment locations to determine an appropriate response. If uninhabited, the encampment location is added to a list for clean-up. If inhabited, park rangers assess the risk level of the site based on predetermined criteria to prioritize the site for closure and clean-up. Concurrently, park rangers notify homeless-serving agency partners of the location and any relevant information about the residents to dispatch appropriate street and housing outreach workers.

Following the connection to support services, encampments are scheduled for closure and clean-up. The amount of time to close an active encampment is dependent on how quickly a person is able to find appropriate accommodations, either shelter or housing. A week before a scheduled closure, the residents and their workers are notified to ensure continuity of service and voluntary compliance.

In some instances, the closure and clean-up of encampments are temporarily paused when the health and wellness of unsheltered residents are further compromised by environmental factors. For example, when an extreme weather response is activated, the closure of encampments is postponed and park rangers prioritize wellness checks on individuals who do not take up shelter in coordination with outreach workers.

How the City and its partners respond to encampments on public land



Edmonton Police Service Involvement

The Edmonton Police Service identifies encampments through complaints from community members or proactive patrols. Police officers would typically notify members of the Encampment Response Team of high-risk encampment sites when possible and/or take independent enforcement action depending on the discretion of the responding member. Data around these interactions was not tracked by Edmonton Police Service.

In February 2021, Edmonton Police Service created a procedure for all members to follow when responding to complaints of encampments on public land that aligns with the Encampment Response Team process. Encampments identified by members will be rerouted to park rangers for investigation, triggering the process outlined above. Police will remain on standby to assist peace officers if necessary. In addition, through strategic, proactive encampment engagement, police officers will conduct focused proactive patrols in and around encampments to reduce victimization and address any criminality. This proactive engagement will allow the officers the opportunity to connect people to resources that need inter-agency assistance.

Included in this new procedure is also a process to capture data related to interactions between Edmonton Police Service members and individuals living in encampments. The information recorded will assist members who deal with these individuals in the future and will benefit investigative units that frequently interact with vulnerable populations.