



Cheyenne Police Department

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Cheyenne Police Department Addresses Recent Claims Involving Homeless Population

CHEYENNE, Wyo.— Friday, December 4th, the Cheyenne Police Department hosted a media event to address claims that officers have been confiscating personal belongings from the city's homeless population.

According to Sgt. James Peterson, many homeless camps on the West Edge of town contain an abundance of garbage and debris which create public safety and health hazards and negatively impact local businesses.

The City of Cheyenne's sanitation department has also voiced concern surrounding the resources required to clean these areas. Each cleanup involves coordinating multiple city departments, and in special cases, hiring contractors and acquiring insurance policies. This year over \$18,500 was spent cleaning the camps.

In an effort to mitigate these negative effects, officers provide warnings to homeless individuals, ask them to pack-up personal items, and refer them to alternate living accommodations.

Property is only confiscated after a warning is provided by an officer or an arrest is made. Subjects are warned that a camp will be cleaned at least one week in advance. Upon an arrest, the subject's property is held at the police department for safe keeping until the individual is released.

"Making arrests and taking belongings is not an effective response to the issue of homelessness," said Sgt. Peterson. "The department focuses on direct outreach to homeless individuals, building partnerships with a wide range of service providers, and encouraging officers to be resourceful and show compassion for the homeless."

Sgt. Peterson is hopeful that with the various shelters open and coordinating this winter that those who need help will have access to a variety of resources. He mentioned that the COMEA shelter operates as an emergency homeless shelter for anyone who finds themselves homeless and has a history of collaborating with law enforcement to share community programs and create opportunities for independent living.

"We don't want to see anyone on the street," said Peterson. "All those who want to get inside can get inside."