

Chehalis

SAFETY, SECURITY & PARKING FAQs



CREATED IN PARTNERSHIP BY
THE CHEHALIS POLICE DEPT & EXPERIENCE CHEHALIS





Introduction

In an effort to provide clarity on issues of safety, trespassing, graffiti, and parking, the Chehalis Police Department and Experience Chehalis offer the following information to our local business community. A clean, safe and welcoming environment to ensure business success and a thriving downtown remain important to us.

Addressing Trespassing & Loitering Questions

Why doesn't Chehalis use the same successful programs as other cities?

There are few — if any — universally applicable solutions to solve the issue of people experiencing homelessness. Although poverty, substance abuse, and the lack of affordable housing are all considered variables related to homelessness, it can look different in other cities or communities. While some solutions may work effectively in certain jurisdictions, it may not in others. At this time, limited staffing in the Lewis County area does affect how law enforcement can respond.

Why doesn't the police department do something about this important topic?

Homelessness is directly related to other challenges, such as mental illness and substance use. Although the police are usually the ones receiving the requests to “do something” about people experiencing homelessness, often their response is very limited. Additionally, when officers try to establish a connection with people experiencing homelessness, they are often met with suspicion or hostility even when trying to provide them with helpful information on accessing services including healthcare, housing, meals, education, employment, and more. In many situations, community organizations are in a more welcomed position to offer help. Even when resources are available, it's not uncommon for those in need to consistently decline services. Please find a list of available local resources included at the conclusion of this document.

Why are panhandlers allowed to operate on city property?

In 2016, the Washington Supreme Court struck down an ordinance prohibiting begging or panhandling on First Amendment grounds in the case of *City of Lakewood v. Willis*. The court emphasized that someone asking for help or aid is considered protected speech and courts will closely scrutinize regulations that focus on that. Other public safety law violations (such as obstructing traffic) may be appropriate enforcement alternatives but based on that court opinion, the police response may be limited when receiving panhandling calls on public property.

If camping is prohibited within City limits why are people camping in our downtown, and in other areas of the city?

Merely resting or sleeping is not illegal. It is important to remember that camping must be established by the use of camping equipment, including tents, sleeping bags, cots, and chairs.

The majority of the time when Police come across people that are camping, they are given an opportunity to comply and encouraged to seek services. In the case of an established encampment, the individual or group is given a 72-hour notice to remove their belongings, and are provided with community resources such as those included in this document. The City's ultimate goal is to connect those living on the streets or in encampments with services, shelter, and housing rather than moving them along to other areas.

Why are the homeless allowed to “hang out” all day in our parks and in our downtown?

Being homeless is not a crime. People experiencing homelessness have the same rights as everyone and are allowed to be in public areas. Merely resting, sleeping, or standing in a particular area is not illegal. The activity becomes unlawful if illegal behavior or actions are taken. For example, possession of an open container of alcohol, public urination or defecation, lying or sitting as to obstruct, aggressive panhandling, camping, or other activity that is prohibited or illegal. If you observe these or other illegal behaviors, please call Lewis County Dispatch, the non-emergency phone line, at 360-740-1105.

If there is someone loitering or trespassing on my property or outside my business, how can I have them removed?

The owner or manager of a property does have the right to ask someone to leave. If someone refuses to leave, you may contact the police department at 360-740-1105 to request assistance (or dial 911 if you feel the situation requires it). Responding officers will likely confirm with you that you have asked the person to leave and are willing to pursue a trespassing violation if they refuse. Additionally, if you would like to have law enforcement remove people from your property when no employees are present, a trespass form is available which can be completed by the owner of the property requesting people be removed after business hours. This form is available online under Business Resources on the www.experiencechehalis.com website.

Another option available in Lewis County is to contact Cascade Community Healthcare's Crisis Services. Their Mobile Crisis Team (MCT) serves anyone inside Lewis County during their crisis. Crisis services are free and available 24/7 throughout the year including holidays. Please call 360-807-2440 or 800-803-8833.

Safety & Security Questions

Are there any grant opportunities available to help cover costs of security cameras?

A Safety & Security Grant is offered by Experience Chehalis. Eligible grant expenses include exterior lighting, improved locks and locking systems, security camera systems and parts, video recording systems, security gates, and professional installation labor fees. The grants provide a 75% match of project costs up to \$1,000 per business, for approved improvement costs in the downtown Chehalis area. Applications will be accepted for as long as funding is available each year. Grant awards will be first-come, first-served, and based on available funding. Applications are reviewed and awarded by Experience Chehalis.

Complete program requirements, guidelines and application is available below online at experiencechehalis.com/business/downtown-safety-security-grant. Please direct questions to info@experiencechehalis.com.

Addressing Graffiti

How do I report graffiti on my property?

If you are a witness to graffiti vandalism while it is happening, call 911 to report it. If you discover graffiti on your property, you can notify the Police Department by calling the non-emergency dispatch line at 360-740-1105.

Is it a good idea to remove graffiti?

Research has shown that removal within 24-48 hours is effective in discouraging repeat vandalism. Graffiti, whether gang-related or not, has a negative effect on a resident's feeling of safety in their neighborhood and creates a perception (whether factual or not) that crime is on the rise and gangs are moving into the area. When graffiti appears and is left up indefinitely, it sends a signal that people just don't care, which in turn attracts other forms of crime to the neighborhood.

What if someone can't afford to or isn't physically able to remove graffiti?

If a property owner can't remove graffiti due to the cost or a physical disability, there may be programs available to assist. Contact the Chehalis Police Department for more information.

What are some of the things I can do to deter graffiti?

If your property is targeted regularly with graffiti, consider making some changes by:

- Removing graffiti as soon as possible when it occurs
- Adding barriers or planting thorny vegetation to prevent access to vulnerable spaces
- Installing lighting
- Moving dumpsters, ladders, pallets or covering drainpipes to prevent climbing
- Using graffiti resistant coating to surfaces to make it easier to clean up
- Adding a mural or a different paint color to discourage graffiti
- Installing security cameras

Parking & Vehicles Questions

How do I report parking violations or abandoned vehicles?

Write down a description of the vehicle, the license plate number and the address where it is parked. You can call the non-emergency line at 360-740-1105 to report the incident.

Why is street parking downtown restricted to two hours?

The time limit restrictions were put in place to prevent vehicles from continually taking up parking stalls in areas where public parking is very limited. In talking with employees and residents who live and work near timed parking areas, we've received a variety of opinions on how long vehicles should be allowed to park, but nothing close to a consensus since everyone has different needs.

As a result, we try to keep a variety of parking options available to meet the needs of the downtown community.

Can I get a handicapped parking stall in front of my business?

Due to the requirements of meeting ADA compliance with a handicapped parking stall, the city would have to make significant changes to the roadway and curb as well as use at least three parking stalls to ensure proper spacing on both sides. Due to the associated cost and loss of available parking, it's unlikely the city will be creating additional handicapped parking at this time.

How can I get deliveries to my business when parking is limited?

The police department will not take parking enforcement action on vehicles that are parked along the street outside of a parking stall as long as it's for a short duration of time, the vehicle is actively being loaded or unloaded, the driver has not blocked the road to other traffic, and their vehicle doesn't block visibility to people crossing in crosswalks. We ask that delivery drivers be considerate of other vehicles in parking stalls that may be blocked from leaving.

What if my customers need to park longer in the downtown area?

Businesses can purchase single-use parking permits at the Chehalis Police Department which would allow customers to park on the street for an additional hour in the 2-hour zones. The cost to the business is \$1 per permit and is specifically meant to accommodate downtown customers who need to park for that additional time. The Chehalis Police Department can be contacted for more information.

CONCLUSION & NEXT STEPS

We would like to thank you for choosing to do business in the City of Chehalis. It is our hope that this FAQ guide has provided information, tools, and resources to empower you as a business owner.

In regard to the increasing number of people experiencing homelessness in our community, no single organization or strategy will solve the myriad of complex issues that contribute to homelessness. Homelessness is a national, statewide, regional, and local challenge. There are many resources going toward addressing this problem. We hope you will continue to be empathic to those who are experiencing homelessness.



Chehalis Police Department
(360) 748-8605
www.ci.chehalis.wa.us

Experience Chehalis
(360) 345-1738
info@experiencechehalis.com
www.experiencechehalis.com



Homeless and Housing Programs

Hope Alliance (formerly Human Response Network) <https://hopealliancehc.org/>
815 W. Main St., Centralia, WA 98531 (360) 748-6601 (800) 244-7414

- Services for Domestic Violence Survivors
- Emergency Shelter Services for Women and Children
- Medical Advocacy
- Crime Victim's Compensation

Housing Resource Center <https://www.hrclewiscounty.com/>
621 South Diamond, Centralia, WA 98531 360-736-5140

- Emergency Shelter Services
- Homeless Prevention
- Housing and Essential Needs
- Rapid Rehousing

Homeless Prevention Services

Salvation Army <https://centralia.salvationarmy.org/centralias/overcome-poverty/>
303 North Gold, Centralia, WA 98531
360-736-4339

- Homeless Prevention
- Meal Assistance
- Job Training
- Food Bank
- Hygiene Center
- T-RAP (Emergency rental assistance)

Permanent Supportive Housing

Reliable Enterprises <http://reliableenterprises.org/housing-services/>
Eligibility for permanent supportive housing is done in conjunction with Coordinated Entry Services through Housing Resource Center <http://lewiscsp.org/>.

The of the night-by-night shelter is the Salvation Army located at 303 N Gold St, Centralia WA 98531