



# City of Malibu News

23825 Stuart Ranch Road • Malibu, California • 90265-4861  
Phone (310) 456-2489 • Fax (310) 456-3356 • [www.malibucity.org](http://www.malibucity.org)

---

## **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

September 9, 2021

**Contact:** Matt Myerhoff, Media Information Officer

Cell: 424-395-6450

[mmyerhoff@malibucity.org](mailto:mmyerhoff@malibucity.org)

### **City of Malibu Takes Steps to Address Fire Danger Posed by Homeless Encampments**

(Malibu CA) – The Malibu City Council voted unanimously on August 23, 2021 to declare a local emergency and establish a program for reducing the risk of fires associated with unhoused people engaged in unpermitted and unregulated camping in City limits.

The resolution also directs City staff to work with the Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department to identify homeless encampments in Malibu; provide notification of the prohibition to the people residing in the encampments and provide connections to available resources; and ensure that Malibu remains free of homeless encampments while ensuring that these efforts do not criminalize people experiencing homelessness.

“Wildfire is Malibu’s number one safety threat, and we must address the very real threat to lives and homes in the community posed by homeless encampments in this Very High Fire Hazard Severity Zone, which encompasses the entire City of Malibu,” said Mayor Paul Grisanti. “So far this year, we have had nearly 20 fires that started in homeless encampments in Malibu, and any one of them could have become disasters. Malibu is a compassionate community that has been dedicating significant resources toward services and outreach for people experiencing homelessness, but the situation has become far too dangerous, for Malibu residents as well as the people living in homeless encampments who may become trapped during a fire. Public safety must come first.”

The entire City of Malibu is within territory designated by CAL FIRE as a Very High Fire Hazard Severity Zone (VHFHSZ) based on its vegetation, steeply sloping topography and fire history, among other factors. Currently, local factors such as live fuel moisture and extreme drought conditions make wildfire an ever more dangerous risk to the City, its residents, and its unhoused population. Malibu has experienced numerous wildfires that have destroyed many homes, threatened lives, and required massive evacuations in past decades. The 2018 Woolsey Fire was the largest in County history and burned nearly 100,000 acres, destroyed 500 homes in Malibu, and killed three people.

The wildfire threat to Malibu is only growing more serious. With 2021 on track to surpass 2020 as the most devastating fire season in state history, the City is moving with urgency to reduce the risk of fire to protect the community. Since most vegetation fires in the Santa Monica Mountains are caused by human activity, including sparks from power lines, car accidents, weed whackers, arson, and campfires, the City and other agencies are actively working to reduce the likelihood of fire ignition from these causes.

City Public Safety staff have been stepping up efforts to address the risk posed by encampments before the Emergency Declaration, but the Declaration provides much needed urgency and a tool to facilitate cooperation from outside agencies.

In addition, the Malibu City Council will consider an amendment to the City's Anti-Camping Ordinance during a Special Virtual Meeting on Monday, September 13 at 4:30 PM. The agenda and staff report are posted at

<https://www.malibucity.org/AgendaCenter/ViewFile/Item/5154?fileID=23940>. The amendment would make the ordinance enforceable by the Sheriff's Department, within the constraints of the Martin vs. Boise court ruling, which has been an obstacle to enforcing Malibu's ordinance. It would also provide a legal tool to remove individuals who are living in areas that pose an extreme fire danger, thereby reducing the chances of a fire start caused by a cooking or warming fire, or other means such as smoking.

**Recent City efforts include:**

- The City Council approved an amendment to the City's Nuisance Code to strengthen the City's ability to address homeless encampments on private property, including giving authority to the City Manager to take immediate action to address a nuisance that poses an imminent threat to the physical safety of the community. The amendment was approved by the City Council on August 9, 2021 and goes into effect on September 9, 2021.
- The Public Safety staff worked with the members of the LA County Sheriff's Department Homeless Outreach Services Team (HOST) Team on August 11 to conduct an initial assessment of encampments within the City of Malibu. During the assessments, HOST Team members engage homeless individuals, advise them of their purpose and provide them with fire danger information. From this assessment, seven encampment sites were identified for clean-up in the near future.
- The Public Safety staff collaborated with members of the HOST Team and the Homeless Liaison Deputy on August 25 to coordinate efforts in response to the directives within the City Council Resolution Declaring the Existence of a Local Emergency.
- In collaboration with California State Parks staff and private property owners, public safety staff helped facilitate the clean-up of the encampments in the Malibu Creek area on August 26, including the area under the Pacific Coast Highway bridge over the creek where three fires recently broke out.
- Working with a private property owner and the Sheriff's HOST Team, public safety staff helped to clear an encampment in eastern Malibu on August 28.
- Public safety staff continues to explore project options for grant funds being provided to the Las Virgenes-Malibu Council of Governments through Measure H to address Homelessness issues. Possible projects include purchasing motel vouchers and funding additional assistance from the Sheriff's HOST Team to ensure encampments stay clear during Red Flag fire conditions.
- Public safety staff coordinated a local Homeless Count on Tuesday, August 31. Members of the City's Homelessness Task Force, Homelessness Working Group and Public Safety Commission participated in the count. This data will be used to assist homeless outreach efforts and HOST Team efforts to clear encampments.

Other fire preparedness efforts being conducted by the City include home ignition zone assessments, public education on fire preparedness and the safe use of weed whackers, a hazard tree removal program, neighborhood chipper events to further encourage brush clearance, a multi-agency exercise with partner agencies to improve response coordination and many events in September for National Preparedness Month.

During the August 23 meeting, the City Council also introduced a draft amendment to the City's camping ordinance which will be brought back to the Council for a first reading during a special virtual City Council meeting on Monday,

September 13. The meeting time, and viewing and commenting instructions are posted on the website at [www.MalibuCity.org/agendacenter](http://www.MalibuCity.org/agendacenter).

Learn more about the City’s efforts to address homelessness at [www.MalibuCity.org/Homelessness](http://www.MalibuCity.org/Homelessness).

###

