



OFFICE OF
COMMISSIONER
RENE GONZALEZ

For Immediate Release
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Fire Commissioner Rene Gonzalez: “There is no such thing as a safe fire in a Portland homeless camp.”

Yesterday, Portland Fire & Rescue responded to multiple tent fires at unsanctioned homeless camps in our city. According to a media report from KOIN of one such fire along the I-5 North, “a large plume of black smoke” could be seen from “miles away.”

Portland's Fire Commissioner Rene Gonzalez released the following statement this morning on the events:

“Yesterday’s dangerous tent fires are another example of the public safety crisis that’s ongoing on Portland’s streets, and how we’ve enabled the situation to get this bad. As has been made clear in our conversations with the city’s Fire Marshal, there is no such thing as a safe fire at Portland’s homeless camps.

“The best way forward is to drive access to safe heating sources and other critical services for our unhoused in sanctioned service hubs and shelters. Our team has already begun engaging public safety stakeholders on this topic, and we will have further guidance for our bureaus by February 15.”

Portland Fire Bureau Data on Homeless Camp Fires. A 2021 analysis by Portland Fire & Rescue (PF&R) of homeless related fire calls revealed that between mid-2019 and 2021, PF&R responded 2560 fires in homeless camps, with over 99% of those coming from unsanctioned camps. In 2021, 31% of Portland’s fire deaths were among the unhoused population.

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