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Page 12



BOILING POINT

**Black Lives Lost In
Scorching Neglect After
County Stops Providing
Water During Heatwave**
By Robert J. Hansen, Page 8



Local

Two Unhoused Men Die During Heatwave After County Stops Delivering Water

By Robert J. Hansen
OBSERVER Staff Writer

Sacramento has experienced temperatures well over 100 degrees every day since July 1, the same day Sacramento County stopped delivering water to homeless camps.

In that time two unhoused Black men have died due to heat-related symptoms, said Crystal Sanchez, President of the Sacramento Homeless Union.

Steven Easley, 62, was found dead at his encampment on July 4th and the other, whose name has not been released by the coroner, was found two days ago.

The coroner has yet to confirm why Easley died.

"It's really bad out here, it needs to be deemed a public health crisis at this point," Sanchez told The OBSERVER. "I find it heart-breaking that unhoused people are dying on our streets in this heatwave without access to the basics like water and basic needs that they need to survive. This is an incredibly unjust situation and reflects a lack of resources and care for those who are most vulnerable in our society."

The county began delivering water to encampments in 2020 and was funded by American Rescue Plan Act dollars through a contract with the health-related nonprofit Safe Alternatives Through Networking and Education (SANE) as part of the COVID public health crisis, said county spokesperson Kim Nava.

"Water delivery, as it has been done the last four years, sunset on June 30 because funding for those services was almost completely exhausted and the COVID pandemic is over," Nava told The OBSERVER in an email.

Sanchez said it's a tragedy that people are suffering without the basic assistance they need to stay alive and is further compounded by the fact that the government failed to provide adequate resources to prevent this situation from happening.

"They had ample time to prepare for this heatwave and should have done more to provide safe shelter and relief to the unhoused population instead they chose to remove the water as this heat wave approached. This lack of action reflects a disregard for the well-being of the most marginalized members of our society."



Mahkuasah Tankins, right, is loaded onto a gurney and taken to a nearby hospital by Sacramento first responders for heat-related symptoms on July 9. Robert J. Hansen, OBSERVER

The OBSERVER witnessed a man, Mahkuasah Tankins, on Arden Way in Del Paso Heights being taken to the hospital Tuesday, July 9th for what appeared to be heat-related symptoms.

A Sacramento firefighter told The OBSERVER that the department has responded to "a lot" of calls related to heat exhaustion or other heat-related issues since the heatwave began July 1.

The fire department did not respond to The OBSERVER's request for the number of heat-related calls it has received this month.

There are more than 6,600 homeless people in Sacramento County according to a local nonprofit's report released last month.

Black people still are three to four times more likely to experience homelessness in Sacramento, according to the report. Native Americans are five to six times more likely.

Residents at Camp Resolution in North Sacramento, who live in city-issued trailers without air conditioning, are now scrambling for drinking water.

Vina Carter, 62, has lived at Camp Resolution

for almost two years, said she now relies on donations for water or buying it herself.

Carter, who uses at least five gallons of water a day for drinking and bathing, said that she has been lightheaded and experienced other heat-related issues since the county stopped delivering water.

"I think it's inhumane, they could work something out," Carter said.

The supervisors were aware that the ARPA funding for those services was ending, according to Nava.

Local

Supervisors Phil Serna, Patrick Kennedy, Rich Desmond and Pat Hume did not respond to emails requesting comment.

Pinky Toney with The Alliance of Californians for Community Empowerment Action, a nonprofit organization that works for fair housing, dropped off several large bags of ice and several cases of drinking water on Tuesday.

Toney said that The Sacramento Alliance has always donated water to Camp Resolution but are ramping up their efforts now that county support has ended.

“That’s why I’m here,” Toney said.

Alayterya Gregory, 31, became homeless after her mother died and relied on the water the county provided. “Now I have to travel across town to go to a friend’s house to fill up my jugs to get water that we can drink,” Gregory said.

Because of the heat and lack of air-conditioning, she puts her bed outside under a canopy for relief. “During the day inside the trailers, it’s entirely too hot,” Gregory said.

Nava said the county spent \$630,893 purchasing and delivering water since June 2020 and made a large purchase of water to last through the summer of 2024 but supplies ran out and are no longer available in unincorporated areas of the county.

Pallet delivery is being replaced by gallon water distribution in the unincorporated county through the contractor Community HealthWorks, as well as available through additional channels such as the mobile vet clinic PAWS and at the SANE clinic.



Alliance of Californians for Community Empowerment Action member Pinky Toney, left, delivers water and ice to Camp Resolution leader Sharon Jones, right, on July 9 after the county stopped delivering water to homeless camps on July 1. **Roberta Alvarado, OBSERVER**

Cities where Community HealthWorks staff is doing outreach will also have access to this stockpile as long as it lasts. After the stockpile is depleted, water availability within city jurisdictions will be at the discretion of local municipalities.

Nava said there are locations where water pickups are available throughout the county and the list can be found [here](#).

Some of the locations include Depot Park in Rio Linda on Tuesday from 10 a.m. to noon and Freedom Park in North Highlands on Wednesday from 10 a.m. to noon.

More locations include:

- Discovery Park Wednesday 10 to 11 a.m.
 - Northgate Tuesday 9 a.m. to noon
 - Two Rivers and Trail/Township Tuesday 12:30 to 3:30 p.m.
 - Carmichael Park Tennis Courts Wednesday 10 a.m. to noon
 - Southgate Library Thursday 10 a.m. to noon
 - Larchmont Community Park Tuesday 10 a.m. to noon
 - Arcade Library Tuesday 10 a.m. to noon
- The county also has extended cooling centers to be open until July 12. For more information, contact 211 or email INFO@211SACRAMENTO.ORG to reach a 211 representative.
- City spokesperson Tim Swanson didn’t say if the city planned to pick up the bill to deliver water to homeless camps but that the city provides free drinking water at over 160 locations, primarily in parks and sports complexes.
- A detailed list is available here or can be accessed at <https://www.cityofsacramento.gov/ypce/parks/park-directory>. Additionally, water is available at community centers, <https://www.cityofsacramento.gov/ypce/community-centers>.



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