

Chapter 8.35

CAMPING

8.35.010 Purpose and Findings

- A. The Town Council finds that unauthorized camping on public or private property without adequate sanitation, water, or waste disposal creates conditions detrimental to public health, safety, and welfare, including increased fire hazards, unsanitary conditions, environmental degradation, public nuisance impacts, and risks to both campers and the surrounding community.
- B. The Town further finds that camping in parks and other public spaces interferes with the public's ability to safely use and enjoy those spaces for their intended purposes.
- C. Pursuant to the Town's police powers and nuisance abatement authority, including RCW 35.63.080, RCW 35.22.280, and RCW 46.55.240, the Town declares that unauthorized camping constitutes a public nuisance and may be prohibited and abated.
- D. The Town acknowledges the requirements of RCW 35.21.915 concerning outdoor encampments hosted by religious organizations and intends that this chapter be applied consistently with those statutory protections.

8.35.020 Definitions

For the purposes of this chapter:

- A. **"Camping"** means occupying, lodging, or remaining overnight, or erecting or maintaining a temporary or permanent shelter or living accommodation, including but not limited to tents, huts, lean-tos, tarps, vehicles, trailers, or recreational vehicles.
- B. **"Public property"** means all real property owned, leased, or controlled by the Town of Wilkeson, including but not limited to parks, open space, streets, sidewalks, trails, rights-of-way, parking lots, and any other public facilities.
- C. **"Private property"** means real property owned by any person or entity other than the Town, including vacant lots.
- D. **"Utilities"** means potable water, sanitary sewer or septic facilities approved by the Town or Pierce County Health Department, and appropriate waste disposal services.
- E. **"Religious organization"** shall have the same meaning as set forth in RCW 35.21.915.

8.35.030 Camping on Public Property Prohibited

A. It is unlawful for any person to camp or allow camping on any public property in the Town of Wilkeson.

B. No person shall erect or maintain a tent, temporary shelter, vehicle, or any structure used for camping on public property.

C. No person shall sleep, lodge, or remain overnight in a park, right-of-way, public parking lot, or other public area.

D. This section does not apply to:

1. Activities or events authorized by the Town through a written permit or agreement; or
2. Emergency shelter operations conducted or authorized by the Town in response to a declared emergency.

8.35.040 Camping on Private Property

A. It is unlawful to camp on private property without the property owner's permission.

B. No camping shall be permitted on vacant or unimproved private property unless:

1. The property is equipped with functioning and approved utilities, including potable water and sanitary sewer or septic facilities; and
2. The camping activity complies with all applicable fire, health, building, and zoning codes.

C. The property owner shall be responsible for ensuring compliance with this section.

D. The Town may issue administrative citations or initiate abatement if camping occurs on private property in violation of this section.

8.35.050 Religious Encampments – Statutory Exemption

A. Nothing in this chapter shall be construed to prohibit or unreasonably interfere with the hosting of outdoor encampments or safe parking efforts by religious organizations as authorized by RCW 35.21.915.

B. Any religious organization seeking to host an outdoor encampment shall:

1. Provide written notice to the Town consistent with RCW 35.21.915; and
2. Comply with reasonable health and safety regulations adopted pursuant to state law.

C. The Town may impose reasonable conditions necessary to protect public health and safety, provided such conditions do not substantially burden the free exercise of religion in violation of RCW 35.21.915 or constitutional law.

8.35.060 Nuisance Declaration and Abatement

A. Camping on public or private property in violation of this chapter is declared a public nuisance per se.

B. The Town is authorized to:

1. Issue civil infractions or administrative citations;
2. Order the removal of unauthorized camps; and
3. Initiate abatement proceedings consistent with applicable law.

C. Any property owner permitting or maintaining a nuisance in violation of this chapter shall be jointly and severally responsible for abatement costs.

8.35.070 Enforcement and Penalties

A. Violations of this chapter constitute a civil infraction punishable by a civil penalty not to exceed \$250 per day for each violation.

B. Each day a violation continues constitutes a separate and distinct violation.

C. The Town may pursue enforcement through:

1. Administrative citation and fines;
2. Nuisance abatement proceedings;
3. Civil action in a court of competent jurisdiction; or
4. Any combination thereof.