

# Strategic approach to protests, assemblies and marches in our community

SALEM POLICE DEPARTMENT

Presentation to Salem City Council • January 11, 2021





The grounds of the Oregon Capitol Mall have been the stage for approximately 100 events and protests since June 2020.

# Communication



CITY OF *Salem*  
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## Questions About Recent Protests, Assemblies, and Marches in Salem

Categories: Departments and Agencies News

December 30, 2020

[A Statement from Chief Womack Regarding Protests](#)  
[Una declaración de parte del jefe de policía sobre las protestas](#)

Over the past few weeks, residents have asked us questions and shared concerns about recent protests, public assemblies and marches in Salem. The Salem Police Department will continue to protect public safety while managing such events, including issuing citations where appropriate. Our primary goal is to prevent or intervene in acts of violence or property damage, while respecting individuals' right to free speech and assembly. Here are answers to the most common questions.

### Why is this happening in Salem?

Our city is home to the State Capitol, the seat of government for Oregon. This makes us a host for many groups and activities in which people exercise their rights of free speech to be heard by those elected to serve, the Legislature, and the Governor. We take that responsibility – and public safety – seriously, regardless of the content of the speech or the ideology of the groups. For events that occur at the State Capitol, the Oregon State Police has jurisdiction and enforcement responsibility. However, the Salem Police Department and Oregon State Police have a longstanding partnership and assist each other when requested and needed during assemblies, protests and demonstrations.

### Are the protests, assemblies or marches issued permits?

Currently, public assemblies are not permitted, sanctioned, or endorsed by the City. When the State of Oregon required monitors for large assemblies, Salem stopped issuing permits for special events in the parks or for the use of the streets for parades and marches. Our intent was to discourage social gatherings, consistent with public health guidance. When we know of events in advance and have contact information, the City always requests the cooperation of event organizers in complying with public safety and public health guidelines and requirements.

### Can the City prevent or shut down assemblies or marches?

The City cannot prevent assemblies and marching absent a specific, direct, and actionable threat of violence or property damage. Language has sometimes been offensive, obscene, and personally objectionable, but has not risen to a level to preemptively stop a march. Freedom of speech is



# Set objectives



## Police Chief Womack Issues Statement About Expected January 1 Protests

The Salem Police Department is aware of several protests that are planned in our community on Friday, January 1, 2021. These protests may impact areas and city streets near the Oregon State Capitol, Bush's Pasture Park and Mahonia Hall. The Salem Police Department, in partnership with the Oregon State Police and the Marion County Sheriff's Office, will have resources including patrol, crowd management teams and SWAT officers to monitor and manage the protests as they unfold.

The Salem Police Department's preparations have included reaching out to protest organizers. Conversations with organizers about safe and lawful protests and the actions which could result in police enforcement or intervention are an important component to maintaining order and safety for everyone. Although attempts to speak with all persons involved have not yet been successful, we remain open to the opportunity for communication.

We recognize the concerns brought forward by residents. These events have affected our entire city in one way or another. When opposing groups come into contact, the risk of violence increases as evidenced in previous protests. The recent events at the Oregon State Capitol also resulted in violence and property damage. Due to these past unacceptable and unlawful actions, the Salem Police Department has set the following objectives and goals for its response to the upcoming protests.

- Our primary goal is to prevent or stop violence, prevent or stop property damage and deny the unlawful occupation of public or private buildings, while respecting individuals' right to free speech and assembly.
- Keep opposing groups from converging in order to prevent violence and best ensure community safety.
- Take proper enforcement action to address minor offenses when reasonable and appropriate.
- Ensure follow-up investigation of criminal behavior that was not immediately addressed.

**PUBLIC  
SAFETY**

**CONSTITUTIONAL  
RIGHTS**



# Communication



# Organizers



# Neighborhoods



# Overall community

JANUARY 5, 2021

## Protest at State Capitol Expected January 6

**Salem, Ore.** — The Salem Police Department and [Oregon State Police](#) are aware of a planned protest at the Oregon State Capitol on Wednesday, January 6, 2021. *Operation Occupy the Capitol!* is set to begin at noon.

For events that occur at the state capitol, the Oregon State Police (OSP) has jurisdiction and enforcement responsibility. However, the Salem Police Department will work in a support role to OSP and assist when requested and needed. The assistance may include patrol, crowd management teams and SWAT officers deploying to the state capitol or the surrounding areas.

Salem Police officers are ready and prepared to achieve Chief Womack's [previously set objectives](#) related to [protest activities](#) in the Salem Police Department's jurisdiction.

To the extent possible, residents are encouraged to avoid the area around the state capitol as there may be disruptions to traffic flow.



# Communication



## Partner agencies

CITY OF SALEM  
FIRE & PUBLIC WORKS DEPARTMENTS

OREGON STATE POLICE  
MARION COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE  
AND OTHER REGIONAL AGENCIES

SALEM HEALTH

DISTRICT ATTORNEY'S OFFICE





These goals and objectives are based solely upon the neutral interests of overall public safety, regardless of the view held or expressed by any particular group.



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