

# Salem News You Don't Get in *The Salem News*

## 247 Incidents involving homeless individuals in one month, April 1-30, 2026

### “Do you mind if I smoke here?”

My Endicott Street neighbor came home to a stranger sitting on his stoop smoking weed from a two-foot bong. “He’d been kicked out of the High Street playground and asked if he could sit here,” said the neighbor. “This is the same guy I found snorting coke off my windowsill.” The bong smoker is a Lifebridge resident. And, yes, the neighbor did mind.

Another neighbor saw three Lifebridge residents shooting up in the memorial Bell Yard adjacent to the former Christopher Columbus Club, which is now part of the Lifebridge facility. These are not isolated incidents. Everyone in the neighborhood has seen drug use in progress. Cast-off needles, empty nip bottles, and cigarette butts litter our streets.

Indeed, cigarettes and drugs, as well as loitering and trash, have been the subject of many recent complaints by Salem residents on the online bulletin board, *See Click Fix*. For every bleeding-heart citizen or public official who dismisses our complaints, there is someone living in or visiting Downtown who is exasperated, angry, or scared at what has become of our city.

This month there were 247 police responses to incidents among Salem’s homeless population, and those are just the ones that were called in. Among them: requests for medical aid, loitering, thefts, altercations, harassments, and a sexual assault. As always, Lifebridge and the area surrounding it—particularly Margin Street and Riley Plaza—draw the greatest number of police responses. Businesses along the Essex Street pedestrian mall are calling the police. We’re also seeing more calls from the businesses on Highland Avenue. Police are now averaging eight responses a day. —Joanne Mattera

### 98 Medical Aid responses

Not all incidents required a full-on response with police cruiser and fire truck, but consider this: Every time a fire truck leaves the station, the cost to taxpayers is \$750. From online research specific to Salem: “The \$750 figure per incident covers personnel wages (police/fire), vehicle maintenance, fuel, and medical equipment used at the scene.” Fifty calls a month? That’s \$37,500. One hundred calls? \$75,000.

### 59 Responses to the Lifebridge area

22 responses to Lifebridge  
21 to Margin Street around Lifebridge  
16 to Riley Plaza across from Lifebridge.

### 13 to Specific Addresses

2 at the Salem Police Department  
2 at Walgreen’s on Derby Street

2 at Witch City Mall  
1 at City Hall Annex  
1 at the Firehouse on Lafayette Street  
1 at Salem Depot  
1 at Salem Hospital Emergency Department  
1 at Steve’s Liquors on Gedney Street  
1 at Tabernacle Church on Washington Street  
1 at the Village Tavern on Essex Street Mall

### 13 to Redacted Locations

4 on Washington Street  
1 on Boardman Street  
1 on Bridge Street  
1 on Derby Street  
2 on Canal  
2 on Federal Street  
1 on Essex Street  
1 on Watson Street

### 13 Responses to Highland Avenue

- 3 on Traders Way
  - 3 at Burger King
  - 2 at Shaw's Supermarket
  - 1 at Home Depot
  - 1 at McDonald's
  - 1 at North Shore Medical Center
  - 1 at Planet Planet Fitness
  - 1 at Target
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### Unwanted Presences

I've grouped three categories here—Loitering, Suspicious Persons, and Trespassing--because all involve people being where they are not invited. The police are called when a request to move along is disregarded, or an individual keeps returning, or when the caller sees something that does not look right.

### 61 Loitering Responses

The police term is "Undesirable/unwanted guest." For businesses, loitering can result in loss of income. We'd like to cultivate our businesses, not alienate them. Downtown stores are a convenience for us. And they pay taxes.

### 35 Responses to Specific Locations

- 7 in the Witch City Mall
  - . 4 in the Mall
  - . 2 at Silver Moon Comics
  - . 1 at Essex Pizza
- 6 in the Lifebridge/Margin Street area
  - . 1 at Lifebridge
  - . 4 on Margin Street
    - . 1 at the Transition shelter on Canal Street
- 3 at the CVS on Essex Street Mall
- 3 at the Salem Public Library
- 2 at Eastern Bank
  - . 1 on Congress Street
  - . 1 on Central Street
- 2 at Salem Housing Authority Senior apartments on Charter Street
- 2 at Walgreens on Derby Street
- 1 at TD Bank on Loring Avenue
- 1 at Hawthorne Hotel on Washington Sq. West
- 1 at High Street Park
- 1 at Hotel Salem on Essex Street
- 1 at Salem Hospital Emergency Department
- 1 at South Harbor Garage
- 1 at Speedway on Derby Street
- 1 at Museum Place Garage
- 1 at Wendy's on Lafayette Street
- 1 at the YMCA on Sewall Street

### 22 To Redacted Locations

- 5 on Washington Street
- 3 on Essex Street
- 3 on High Street
- 2 on Charter Street
- 1 on Becket Street
- 1 on Church Street
- 1 on Derby Street
- 1 on Flint Street
- 1 on New Liberty Street
- 1 on Palmer Street
- 1 on Lafayette Street
- 1 on Leavitt Street
- 1 on Loring Avenue

### 15 Suspicious persons

A **Suspicious Person** is one whose behavior suggests that an illegal act has been committed or is about to be. In this latter instance, instinct may be a guide.

### 7 to Specific Locations

- 1 at Maria's Place on Jefferson Avenue
- 1 at Salem Depot
- 1 at Salem Hospital Emergency Department
- 1 at Speedway on Derby Street
- 1 at Steve's Market on Margin Street
- 1 at Sunshine Laundry on Boston Street
- 1 at Witch City Mall

### 8 To Redacted Locations

- 1 on Becket Street
- 1 on Derby Street
- 1 on Essex Street
- 2 on Fort Avenue
- 1 on Gedney Street
- 1 on Lafayette Street
- 1 on Loring Avenue

### 1 Trespassing

This is the unauthorized entry into a person's yard or home. There was one police response to Lincoln Apartments, Lafayette Street

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### 27 Well-being checks

Police are called when a person appears to be unwell. Drugs may be involved, but ill health is also possible.

### 15 Responses to Specific Locations

- 3 to Riley Plaza
- 2 to Lifebridge
- 2 to Steve's Liquors on Gedney Street
- 2 to Steve's Market on Margin Street

- 1 to Flatbread Pizza on Derby Street
- 1 to Maria's Place on Jefferson Avenue
- 1 to New Liberty Innovation School on East India Mall
- 1 to Planet Fitness on Highland Avenue
- 1 to Speedway on Derby Street
- 1 to Ugly Mug Diner on Washington Street

**12 to Redacted Addresses**

- 2 to Jefferson Avenue
- 2 to New Derby/Washington Street
- 1 to Bridge Street
- 1 to Congress Street
- 1 to Essex Street
- 1 to Federal Street/Federal Court
- 1 to High Street
- 1 to Highland Avenue
- 1 to Lafayette/Derby Street
- 1 to Washington Street

**15 Altercations**

A **disturbance** is a verbal **dispute** that has escalated, verbally or physically. A **fight** is an event that typically comes to blows. At the locations noted, neither owners nor customers welcome disruptions.

**9 Disturbances**

- 1 at CVS on Canal Street
- 1 at Georgia's Pizza on Norman Street
- 1 at Rockafella's on Washington Street
- 1 at South Harbor Garage
- 1 at Witch City Mall
- 1 on Central Street
- 1 on Margin Street
- 1 on Salem Common
- 1 on Washington Street

**5 Disputes**

- 2 on Margin Street
- 1 at CVS on Essex Street Mall
- 1 at Lifebridge
- 1 at Witch City Mall

**1 Fight**

On Margin Street

**7 Arrests**

- 4 at Riley Plaza
- 1 on Leavitt Street
- 1 at Steve's Market
- 1 at Sunoco station on Canal Street

**Related:**

**2 people taken into Protective Custody**

- 1 at Riley Plaza
- 1 at Rockafella's

**5 Thefts**

I have grouped several categories here:

**Larcenies**

- 1 on Congress Street
- 1 on Margin Street

**Shoplifting**

- 1 at Steve's Liquors on Gedney Street

**Theft**

- 1 motor vehicle plate from U-Haul on Jefferson Avenue
- 1 item held for safekeeping at Peabody Essex Museum

**5 Harassments**

- 2 at Lifebridge
- 1 on Margin Street
- 1 at North Shore Medical Center on Highland Avenue
- 1 at Riley Plaza

**2 Assaults**

- 1 at Riley Plaza
- 1 at Witch City Mall

**2 Domestic Disturbances**

- 1 on Jefferson Avenue
- 1 on Lafayette Street

**2 Drunk persons**

Both at Lifebridge

**2 Missing Adults**

- 1 from Lifebridge
- 1 from Pioneer Terrace

**One each of:**

**Drugs** at Broad Street Cemetery

**Lost and Found,** on Summit Street

**Mutual aid** on Highland Avenue

**Sexual Assault** on Loring Avenue at Leggs Hill Road

**Suspicious Item** on Essex Street at Barton Square

**Unresolved 911 call** from Riley Plaza

**Vandalism** on Jefferson Avenue

## 14 Community Impact Unit Reports

In addition to the police responses noted, a proactive police team, known by its initials as the CIU, reaches out to help homeless individuals. Many of these individuals are known to the CIU officers, and in many instances a mutual rapport has developed over time. The contents of these reports are not a matter of public record.

### FYI: How this narrative takes shape

This narrative takes several workdays to prepare from the report pages I receive from the Salem Police Department. I do not do this because I have a grudge against the homeless but because this is news that does not get covered elsewhere. Would I rather be doing something else? Yes.

I am self-employed, and preparing this document takes away time from my income-producing work, but I consider this a service to the community, even though it contains inconvenient truths.

Step 1: I review the pages sent to me. For this issue, there were 10 pages, a screengrab of which you see at right. Incidents are entered by date.

Step 2: Using felt pens, I mark the pages, assigning a different color to each category.

Step 3: I add up the incidents in each category.

Step 4: I organize the categories, listing first those with the greatest number of police responses. The SPD redacts specific addresses for privacy, but I can organize the information by general location. I try to explain nuances between various categories.

Step 5: After edits and several rounds of proofreading, I convert the Word document to a PDF and send it to the person who manages the Gesna-salem.com website.

Do I offer editorial comment on the information? Yes, unapologetically. Until the local paper of record starts reporting the problem, until the Mayor is honest with us about the extent and cost of the problem, and until our responders tell you how they really feel about being tasked with the Sisyphean effort of helping people, many of whom do not wish to be helped, I'll keep reporting—and commenting—on this ever-growing problem in Salem. —J.M.

## The Incident Report from the SPD

Here you see 10 pages with incidents entered by date. Some addresses are redacted to preserve privacy. I organize this data by category and provide context.

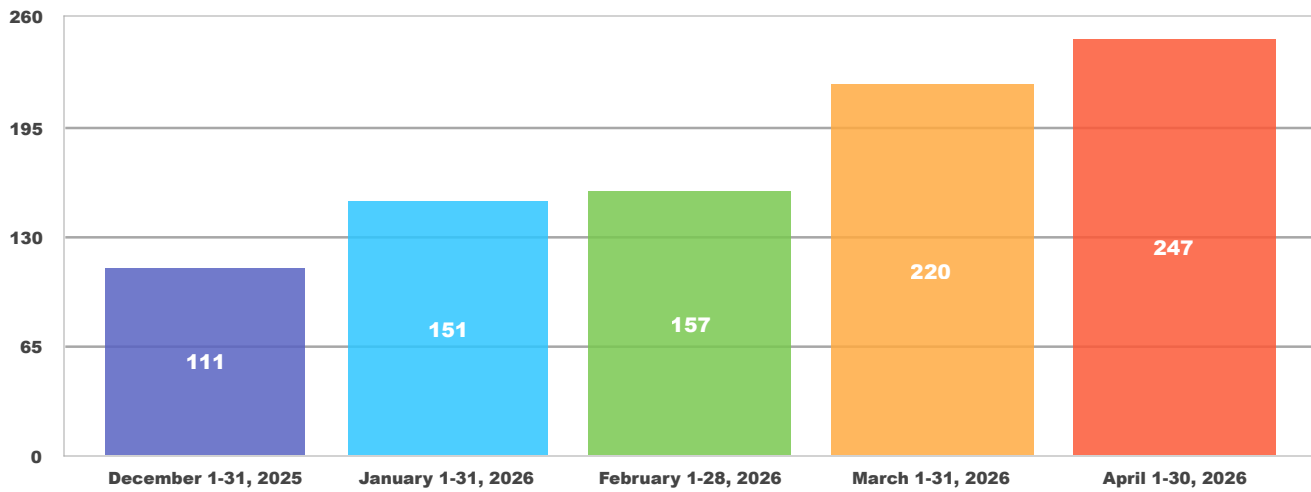
The image displays a grid of 10 screenshots of incident reports from the Salem Police Department, arranged in two columns and five rows. Each screenshot shows a table of incident data with columns for date, time, location, and description. Some addresses are redacted with black boxes. The reports are organized by date and category.

### TRACKING INCIDENTS OVER FIVE MONTHS

MONTH	INCIDENTS	AVERAGE PER DAY
December 1-31, 2025	111	3.58
January 1-31, 2026	151	4.87
February 1-28, 2026	157	5.60
March 1-31, 2026	220	7.10
April 1-30, 2026	247	8.23
<b>TOTAL INCIDENTS</b>	<b>886</b>	<b>5.87</b>

SOURCE: Salem Police Dept.  
Infograph courtesy GESNA/ONOH.

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