

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

112 (plus) incidents involving homeless individuals in one month, December 1-31, 2025

This month's installment of **Salem News You Don't Get in *The Salem News*** is a first. Here we are seeing a month's worth of incidents involving some of the unhoused population in Salem. The longer timespan allows us to view patterns of activity, as well as to see a greater range of situations being dealt with by police, businesses, and neighbors. This report is not intended to demonize the unhoused residents of the city but to keep us aware of their activity at Lifebridge and the area around it. It is, as the title says, Salem news you don't get anywhere else.

– Joanne Mattera

While Downtown is the locus of much homeless activity, you can see from this report that the police have also responded to venues on Highland Avenue, Boston Street, and what appear to be private homes throughout the city (specific addresses are redacted in the police report I receive). I have **highlighted Lifebridge** to point out how often police responded specifically to that facility. Given the number of calls made to Lifebridge, you may find yourself rightfully wondering why it does not maintain its own security force as well as an on-site medical team. As it stands, Salem taxpayers are footing the bill for a facility that contributes nothing to the city in taxes.

Statistics for December 1-31

39 Requests for Medical Aid

Medical aid can be anything from treatment for a skinned knee to a 911 call that draws police, fire, and ambulance. Of the 39 requests for aid, there was a call for an overdose at Speedway on Derby Street, and three calls for mental health aid, one each at **Lifebridge**, at North Family Laundry on Congress Street, and at an

unidentified location on Highland Avenue.

Other responses were to:

13 at Lifebridge

5 on Margin Street around **Lifebridge**

2 at Witch City Mall

2 on Canal Street

1 on Bridge Street

1 at the Fire Headquarters on New Derby

1 at Healing Abuse Center in Shetland Park

1 on Highland Avenue

1 at Jefferson and Dove Streets

1 at Salem Post Office

1 on Summer Street

1 at Salem Depot

1 at the Salem hospital Emergency Department

1 at Shaw's Market on Trader's Way

1 at Walgreens on Derby Street

1 at Walmart on Highland Avenue

1 on Washington Street

29 Incidents of Loitering

In police parlance, loitering is described as "Undesirable/Uninvited Guests." Police made **five calls to Lifebridge** as well as additional calls to:

All Soul's Lounge on Derby Street

Arge's Liquors on Boston Street

Citgo Quick Mart on North Street

City Hall Annex

CVS on Essex Street

Dunkin Donuts opposite Riley Plaza

Eastern Bank on Congress Street

Emergency Department at Salem Hospital

Koto Grill on Washington Street
Mandee's Pizza on Essex Street
Planet Fitness on Trader's Way
Prime Energy on Lafayette Street
Salem Post Office

Walmart on Highland Avenue
And undisclosed addresses on:

Bridge Street
Chase Street
Ocean Avenue
Pope Street
Church street (2 calls)
Lafayette Street (4 calls)

Note: Police redactions make it unclear if the same address or different addresses were involved on these latter two streets

10 Well-Being checks

There is no indication of the outcome of situations that took place at:

McDonald's on Canal Street
Riley Plaza
Rockafellas on Essex/Washington Street
Salem Post Office

T.J. Maxx on Trader's Way
Urology Consultants on Highland Avenue
And at undisclosed locations on:

Derby Street
Essex/Washington Street
Highland Avenue
Jefferson Avenue

5 Disturbances

The nature of these events was not identified at the following locations:

On the Grind Café, Jefferson Avenue
Riley Plaza
Steve's Market
Walgreens on Derby Street
On Washington Street at Barton Square

5 Disputes

A dispute has not yet advanced to a disturbance or a fight. Typically, perceived theft or loss of an object is the focus. Police were called to:

Lifebridge, twice
Hampton Inn on Washington Street
Salem House of Pizza on Margin Street
Undisclosed address on Margin Street

3 Fights

All at Lifebridge

3 Individuals taken into protective custody

1 from **Lifebridge**
1 from the Salem Five bank
1 at Salem Police Department

2 Domestic disputes

Lafayette Park
At a redacted address on Pope Street

2 Suspicious persons reported

1 at an undisclosed address at New Derby/Washington Streets
1 at a redacted address on Weatherly Drive

2 Trespassing

Speedway on Derby Street
At a redacted address on Cherry Street

Additional events

1 Arrest

At Riley Plaza

1 Assault

At **Lifebridge**

1 City Ordinance Violation

At Steve's Quality Market

1 Drunk individual

At **Lifebridge**

1 Fire

Police assisted the Fire Department at a fire on Central Street

1 Harrassment

At Rockafellas on Essex/Washington Street

1 Mutual Aid

This is an event that requires the police to assist another service entity. Details are not clear, but the event took place at **Lifebridge**

1 Shoplifting

At Steve's Quality Liquors

1 Suicidal Person

On Dove Avenue

1 Undescribed problem

Took place at an undisclosed address on Washington Street

The “plus” incidents

. 9 Community Impact Reports

The Salem Police Department’s Community Impact Unit (CIU) consists of a dedicated group of officers who help unhoused individuals living outside of Lifebridge. I am not privy to their reports, but in the month of December, the CIU issued nine reports documenting their daily activities with members of the unhoused community. Typically this is not about arrests but about efforts to assist

. 14 Directed Patrols

Officers, typically patrolling on foot, made rounds in and around the Witch City Mall. Without access to those reports, I do not know what took place. What is clear is that Directed Patrol is proactively focused on a venue where a number of unhoused people seek shelter

Question: So people are loitering. What’s the big deal?

As tax-paying and rent-paying citizens and businesses of Salem, we are entitled to a reasonable degree of quality of life. If we must climb over someone to get into our home or if a business loses customers because those customers are harassed for money or are made to feel unsafe—particularly when it happens over and over—we lose not only quality of life, we lose patience, we lose compassion, we lose faith in our city government. But more to the point, loitering is an indication that the homeless situation is out of control in Salem.

Question: Are all unhoused people a disruption to Salem and its residents?

Of course not. But there are actions you never know about unless you are specifically affected. Here’s an example: A homeless person left a mess in the elevator at the Post Office. Until a maintenance worker could address the problem, the elevator was shut down. Businesses on the second floor were inconvenienced. So they could take the stairs, right? Well, not if they use a wheelchair, or deal with a physical issue that makes stair climbing impossible, or needed to haul something heavy up or down the stairs. So perhaps not a problem for you, but certainly for others.

Also of concern is that many unhoused folks are suffering from untreated mental illness and substance abuse issues. Some treat our city like a trash bin and a toilet.

Why are you picking on the homeless? They need our help

Of course unhoused members of our society need our help. And we want to help. But we must acknowledge that Salem has a serious problem. It’s shooting the messenger to say that we are “picking on” anyone. Salem has been forced to assume a much greater burden than any other city or town on the North Shore.

Why? Lifebridge has attracted far more people than it can adequately care for, and if those people are not on Lifebridge premises, the management washes its hands of any responsibility—even of clients who otherwise sleep there or drop ins for meals or showers. Because of Lifebridge’s laissez-faire attitude, the actions of unhoused folks drawn to Salem by the presence of Lifebridge have become a problem for the people and businesses surrounding the facility.

But this is an issue that affects every taxpayer (and, by extension, renter) in Salem. Lifebridge pays no taxes yet expects Salem’s police, fire, and public works departments to do its work. Who pays those municipal salaries? We do. You do. Lifebridge does not. Maybe this will become more of an issue as your bills go up.

What’s more, Lifebridge does not offer sufficient services to mentally ill and/or substance-addicted homeless individuals. This is a pot boiling over. It’s not just Salem’s homeless who are affected, not just the surrounding neighborhood residents and businesses, but everyone in this overburdened city.

Express your concern!

If you are concerned about these numbers, let Mayor Pangallo know (mayor@Salem.com) and the City Council, whose members can be reached individually via this e-address: citycouncilors@salem.com. Although our City Council pays little heed to the issues noted here, it remains important to have paper and electronic trails of your concerns and complaints.

Also contact our State Senator, Joan Lovely, and our State Representative, Manny Cruz.

. joan.lovely@masenate.gov

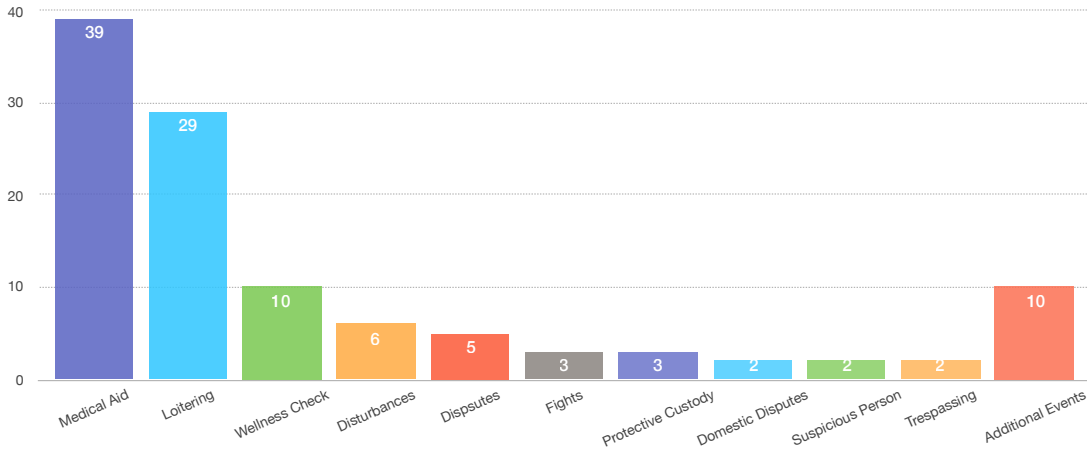
. manny.cruz@mahouse.gov

Incidents: December 1-31, 2025

TYPE	INCIDENT
Medical Aid	39
Loitering	29
Wellness Check	10
Disturbances	6
Dispsutes	5
Fights	3
Protective Custody	3
Domestic Disputes	2
Suspicious Person	2
Trespassing	2
Additional Events	10
TOTAL INCIDENTS	111
SOURCE: Salem Police Dept. Terms as used by SPD.	
Infograph courtesy GESNA/ONOH.	

ADDITIONAL EVENTS: Included Arrest, Assault, Ordinance Violation, Drunk individual, Fire, Harrassment, Mutual Aid, Shoplifting, Suicidal Person, and Undescribed problem.

INCIDENTS TOTAL 111: December 1-31, 2025



PERCENTAGE OF 111 INCIDENTS: DEC 1-31, 2025

