

# Downtown Bellingham RSU Safety Patrols Frequently Asked Questions



The City of Bellingham has contracted with RSU to provide 24/7 safety patrols downtown. These services are intended to increase support resources and reduce public nuisances.

This guide is intended to illustrate common scenarios, and clarify when RSU is authorized to respond and which needs should be directed elsewhere.

## Suspicious Bathroom Use

Who Do I Call?



Someone has occupied my business's restroom for an extended time and refuses to leave.

## 911

The City's contract with RSU is for security and de-escalation in the public realm (streets, sidewalks, alleys and public property), not private property. Call 911. The police and/or Alternative Response Team (ART) will be dispatched to assist.

## Person Enters My Business From Street/Sidewalk Where RSU Started Engaging

Who Do I Call?



RSU is helping an individual in crisis who ends up entering my business. Can they continue assisting them?

## RSU 800-824-2383

Depending on the scenario and their training, the RSU safety agent may decide to continue working with the person inside the building or private property. If the business is in support, this would be within the scope of the City contract. Similarly, the RSU agent may escort someone into a business to purchase coffee or other appropriate items as a de-escalation tool, provided the business is in support.

## Illicit Substance Use

Who Do I Call?



Someone is in the alley using what appears to be an illicit substance.

## 911

Public use of illicit drugs is prohibited under Bellingham Municipal Code. The police may be called for enforcement and will respond based on their availability and triage of other crimes in process. It is unlikely that someone would be booked or prosecuted for this offense due to booking restrictions and lack of jail space at this time.



## Loitering Or Sleeping In Alcoves or Alleys



Who Do I Call?

Someone is occupying an alcove of a business adjacent to the alley. Their possessions are strewn throughout the alcove and spilling out into the alley.

## RSU -or- 911

The City's contract with RSU does not include enforcement of trespassing on private property. However, because the area is contiguous with the alley and causing impacts on the public realm, the safety agent may ask the person to clean up their items and suggest they relocate from the area to avoid trespassing enforcement by police. RSU does have authorization to enforce trespassing orders on public properties, such as alleys, public parking garages and the exterior of public buildings and property.

## Sitting & Lying On The Sidewalk



Who Do I Call?

A person or group are sitting or sleeping at or near my storefront's entrance. How do I encourage them to leave so I can open/close/let customers through?

## RSU -or- 911

The Sitting and Lying Ordinance is a tool RSU can use to let people know that, due to heavy use of sidewalks, it is illegal to sit or lay down on downtown sidewalks, streets or alleys between 7 a.m. and 9 p.m. and that police may be called to enforce if necessary. Police response will depend on their availability and triage of other crimes in process.

## Hanging Out On a Sidewalk



Who Do I Call?

Several people have been hanging out for hours on the sidewalk adjacent to my business, leaning against the walls and smoking cigarettes. How do I get them to move?

## RSU 800-824-2383

If the business/employees feel comfortable, they should start by politely asking people to relocate and/or indicate they need to sweep/clean the area outside the business.

RSU may be contacted with a request for safety agents to inform the people of the complaint and request that they voluntarily move. If they are standing on the public sidewalk or alley, there is no crime taking place and the police will not be able to enforce the request. Loitering laws have fallen out of favor in Washington State due to a history of case law documenting misuse and discrimination. They may only be used when targeting certain illegal behaviors, not against a specific population.