

LOCAL NEWS

Santa Ana and Fullerton armories will open again as shelters at night for homeless starting Oct. 15



Several homeless people head into the National Guard Armory on Brookhurst Road in Fullerton as rain falls during one winter season. The National Guard approved having the armory open as a homeless night shelter starting Oct. 15. (File photo by Kevin Sullivan, Orange County Register/SCNG)

By **JEONG PARK** | jeongpark@scng.com | Orange County Register
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The California National Guard armories in Fullerton and Santa Ana will open as shelter at night for homeless people starting Oct. 15, a month and a half before the facilities' typically would open for the season.

Each armory can shelter about 200 people.

Cities and county officials had pushed the National Guard to open the armories early to provide hundreds of homeless people a place to stay until two facilities – one in Buena Park and another in Placentia – open, which is expected to happen by early 2020.

Ideally, the people staying in the armories would be among the first to go into those two permanent shelters when they open, said Rebecca Leifkes, Fullerton's housing and neighborhood services manager.

Local officials had asked the armories to open as soon as Sept. 1, but having the facilities used by homeless people in September and the beginning of October for shelter could harm the National Guard's readiness to respond to state emergencies such as wildfires, Major General David S. Baldwin, adjutant general of the California National Guard, said in a July 17 letter to the officials.

Baldwin said the National Guard in August and September will use the Fullerton armory to store and inspect equipment necessary to respond quickly to wildfires. The Santa Ana armory will be used to store and repair military vehicles from surrounding armories during the National Guard's annual summer training, Baldwin said.

The armories have been used for years during the winter to house hundreds of homeless people at nights. The people sheltered there received a meal, shower and other services.

Local officials did not expect to continue using the armories after the 200-bed shelter [Bridges at Kraemer Place in Anaheim was completed in 2018](#). But Bridges quickly filled up, and the latest Point in Time count still identified [hundreds of unsheltered individuals](#) in North Orange County.

Earlier this year, the county had asked the National Guard and Gov. Gavin Newsom to extend use of the Fullerton Armory as shelter until June; [the request was turned down.](#)

Local officials are unsure whether the two armories will be needed for shelter after the facilities in Placentia and Buena Park open, Leifkes said. The two shelters will provide a combined 250 beds once built.

The county has allocated \$1.7 million for the armories' operations and services, Orange County Community Resources spokeswoman Mechelle Haines said.

The people sheltered in at least the Fullerton armory will also be able to stay there an hour longer until 7 a.m. Officials had pushed for the later check-out time because some homeless people had said the early morning deadline has deterred them from going to the armory for shelter.

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Jeong Park

Jeong Park | Reporter

Jeong Park covers the inland Orange County cities and communities for The Orange County Register. He was born in Korea but grew up in Southern California, bouncing from Van Nuys to Pomona to Westwood, where he attended UCLA. He spent few months in Indiana as a reporter before coming to the Register. He is always looking for good Asian food, which there are thankfully plenty of in OC.

jeongpark@scng.com

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