

Homeless man found dead in donation bin in San Diego, California

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A man was found dead in a bin used for clothing donations in the City Heights neighborhood of San Diego, California last Friday. Police were called to the scene around 7:15 a.m., a few blocks away from the San Diego Police Department's (SDPD) Multi-Cultural Community Relations building.

Authorities say the man was in his 40s and appeared to be homeless. Foul play was not suspected in his death and it is unclear how long he was stuck in the bin before he died. The man may have been trying to get warm clothing before he suffocated to death.

The man's name has not been released, but local news media spoke with a woman at the scene who say the man was a friend of those who lived in a nearby homeless encampment.

The donation bin where the man was discovered was marked "Clothing & Shoes" and was located in a shopping center parking lot one block away from the San Diego Rescue Mission, a homeless shelter.

The number of homeless deaths has increased significantly over the last several years in the city. At least 117 homeless people died on the streets of San Diego last year, according to the San Diego Rescue Mission. That number does not include those lost to the Hepatitis A outbreak, which killed 20, mostly homeless individuals. The year before there were 90 deaths on the streets of America's "finest city," and in 2014 there were 56 deaths.

Some of last year's casualties included a 21-year-old who overdosed on heroin and a 62-year-old who died from an accident that caused blunt force injuries to his head. Of the 117 deaths listed, 26 were in their 60s.

San Diego has the fourth largest homeless population in the United States, with an estimated 9,160 people homeless on any given night, according to a report by the Department of Housing and Urban Development

(HUD). Only New York City, Los Angeles County and Seattle/ King County in Washington had larger homeless populations.

During a one-night count in January, the number of homeless actually increased by 0.7 percent to 553,742 people over the previous year. This marks the first year-over-year increase in the national homeless population since 2010. In California, the number increased by 13.7 percent to 134,278, which means out of every 10,000 Californians, 34 are homeless. In San Diego, the number increased by 5 percent.

Homelessness has largely increased due to the lack of affordable housing and little or no government assistance to prevent people from sliding into poverty. Especially on the West Coast, where rent rises faster than the average paycheck, those who face the prospect of losing shelter have little or no recourse than staying with friends or in vehicles, or on the streets.

While nationwide, the number of homeless living unsheltered in tents, cars and on the street is 35 percent, in San Diego the number is 61.6 percent. Statewide, California has the highest rate of unsheltered homeless in the US with 68.2 percent of the homeless population unsheltered.



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