



SACRAMENTO COUNTY- December 19, 2014

More homeless people have died in Sacramento County this year than the last two years combined and 2014 isn't over yet. According to a report authored by the Sacramento Regional Coalition to End Homelessness, 110 homeless people have died as of December 5. That is compared to 60 deaths in 2013 and 43 in 2012.

Homeless advocates aren't quite sure what is the cause of this significant increase in homeless deaths, however one theory is that the homeless population in Sacramento is growing. Another theory points to increased alcohol and drug use. The report claims 16 of the deaths this year was due to overdose of methamphetamine.

"It's dangerous," said Jeanette Janice Moore. "It's very dangerous sometimes." Moore has been homeless for more than ten years. She spent Friday evening under the 30<sup>th</sup> street bridge to keep dry. Her dogs, Honey and Sweeties serve as her protectors.

"She gets up and confronts someone who tries something," she said.

Over at Loaves and Fishes, hundreds of Sacramento's homeless line up for a hot meal. Tales of survival are everywhere. Desiree Carter said she is lucky to be alive after an attack at her camp. A man she said she met once, tried to sneak into her tent. "If he is interested in a female and he likes a lot of females, he will go after that female. No is not an option," she explained. Carter managed to get away. "I screamed and I ran for my life and called the cops."

Carter remains hopeful that she will make it off the streets, but some never get that chance. They die on the streets. In 2002, 36 homeless people died in Sacramento County. Those numbers stayed rather consistent over the years, peaking at 61 in 2011. This year is the highest it has ever been since homeless deaths have been recorded. Most are between the ages of 40 and 60 and are men. However, 25% of those that died are women. That is a 12 year high.

"It will decrease a person's natural life expectancy," said Ryan Loofbourrow, Executive Director of Sacramento Steps Forward. "Living outside in the elements, access to food, health conditions often preexisting health conditions that led to homelessness are exacerbated by living outside in inclement weather," he explained.

Loofbourrow met with several homeless advocate groups along with the Sacramento police and Sheriff's department Friday to

discuss ways to fight homelessness. He said he is hopeful by the collaboration, but more services are needed. Still, the reason for the major increase in homelessness is not known. The leading cause of death is alcohol and drug abuse, followed by injury and heart disease.

Sister Libby Fernandez, Executive Director of Loaves and Fishes feeds hundreds of homeless people a day. She also sees how living on the streets affects them.

“It happens daily or several times a day. We have to call 911 because a guest has had a seizure or a heart attack,” she said.

Michael Hanson has been homeless for two years. He has become accustomed to it.

“It is something that we see. Something we deal with on a personal basis,” said Hanson.

Hanson recently lost two close friends. Both were in their thirties and heavy drinkers. He said they died of sclerosis. “They were relatively young. I wouldn’t think that sclerosis happens with younger people.”

Trinity Cathedral will host its first memorial service on Friday night to honor and remember the homeless people who have passed away.