

**DEPARTMENT OF HOUSING AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT
DIVISION OF CODES AND STANDARDS**

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INFORMATION BULLETIN 2026-02 (MP SOP)

TO: City and County Building Officials
Local Planning/Zoning Agencies
Local Enforcement Agencies
Special Occupancy Park Owners/Operators
Interested Parties

FROM: Kyle Krause, Deputy Director
Division of Codes and Standards

SUBJECT: **Assembly Bill 518, Chapter 157, Statutes of 2025
Low-Impact Camping Areas**

This Information Bulletin (IB) provides notification of changes to California law, impacting California counties related to county ordinances that authorize low-impact camping areas as of October 1, 2025, under specified conditions.

Assembly Bill (AB) 518 (Chapter 157, Statutes of 2025) amends the existing definition of Special Occupancy Park (SOP) and authorizes a new statutory use of private properties referred to as low-impact camping areas, which are not considered SOPs subject to the Special Occupancy Parks Act. Low-impact camping areas are defined as follows:

“Low-impact camping area” means any area of private property that provides for the transient occupancy rental of a temporary sleeping accommodation for recreational purposes that is not a commercial lodging facility.

Low-Impact Camping Area Property Requirements and Limitations

AB 518 specifies that low-impact camping areas must meet all of the following requirements:

- (1) Provides for the transient occupancy rental of a temporary sleeping accommodation, not exceeding 14 consecutive nights per camper and not exceeding 28 nights per calendar year per camper.
- (2) Includes no more than nine temporary sleeping accommodations, of which no more than four may be concurrently occupied by recreational vehicles, as defined in Section 18010.

- (3) Does not include a temporary sleeping accommodation that is rented out for permanent human occupancy.
- (4) Does not allow for on street parking.
- (5) Complies with applicable state and local fire safety requirements.
- (6) Complies with applicable state and local tax and fee requirements, including, but not limited to, the payment of local transient occupancy taxes.
- (7) Complies with applicable local requirements for disposal of human waste, or in the absence of applicable local requirements, maintains sanitation facilities that are fully self-contained or connected to a permitted sewage disposal system serving the property.
- (8) Complies with applicable local requirements for disposal of trash, or in the absence of applicable local requirements, requires all solid waste to be removed from the premises after each occupancy and onsite trash receptacles to abide by applicable animal-protection trash best practices or requirements.
- (9) Complies with applicable local requirements for quiet hours, or in the absence of applicable local requirements, enforces quiet hours from 10 p.m. to 6 a.m.
- (10) Complies with applicable local requirements relating to low-impact campsites, low-incident camping, or incidental camping, including, but not limited to, local zoning, permit, lot size, and setback requirements.
- (11) Designates an operator or property manager who is available by phone 24 hours a day, seven days a week.
- (12) Includes no more than one temporary sleeping accommodation per acre and is located on a parcel of two acres or more.
- (13) Requires all temporary sleeping accommodations to be located no less than 200 feet from any offsite residence and no less than 30 feet from any adjoining property or road.
- (14) Is not located on a site that meets both of the following:
 - (A) A site that is a legal parcel or parcels located in a city if, and only if, the city boundaries include some portion of either an urbanized area or urban cluster, as designated by the United States Census Bureau, or, for unincorporated areas, a legal parcel or parcels wholly within the boundaries of an urbanized area or urban cluster, as designated by the United States Census Bureau.
 - (B) A site in which at least 75 percent of the perimeter of the site adjoins parcels that are developed with urban uses.
- (15) Has not been used as a special occupancy park for the last five years unless both of the following are true:
 - (A) The area was a special occupancy park before January 1, 2024.

(B) The area met the requirements of this subdivision on January 1, 2023.

Local Ordinance Required to be Submitted to HCD

Counties that elect to allow for low-impact camping areas must have enacted a local ordinance and must submit that ordinance to the Department of Housing and Community Development (HCD) through HCD's local ordinance, amendment, and report web portal at: www.hcd.ca.gov/building-standards/shl/local-ordinances.

Counties with a valid low-impact camping areas ordinance must also do the following:

- (1) Establish a registry of low-impact camping areas which may include, but not be limited to, the number or operators authorized in the county, a site address of such areas, the number of lots and types of temporary sleeping accommodations, the facility owner and operator names, the date a low-impact camping area is established, summaries of all code enforcement investigations associated with low-impact camping areas, amendments to this information, and any other relevant information deemed appropriate by the county.
- (2) Establish a complaint program to support code enforcement related to low-impact camping areas.
- (3) Require all low-impact camping area owners or operators to post, in a conspicuous location, any permit or registration required by the county to operate the low-impact camping areas and contact information for the county for complaints or information related to low-impact camping areas.

For any questions regarding this IB or the county ordinance submission process, please contact HCD at LowImpactCampingAreas@hcd.ca.gov.

For property owners or interested parties with questions about a county's low-impact camping areas ordinance or other local information on low-impact camping areas, please contact your respective county.