

CHAPTER 40

VEHICLE CAMPING AT RELIGIOUS INSTITUTIONS

40.100 A church, synagogue or other religious institution located in unincorporated Benton County may allow overnight camping in vehicles, subject to the following:

- (1) As used in this chapter, “vehicle” includes a licensed and operable automobile, camper, travel trailer or recreational vehicle. “Vehicle” also includes a rigid-walled, readily transportable temporary sleeping unit exempt from building code and consistent with safety standards issued by the Community Development Director.
- (2) The religious institution shall register with the Benton County Community Development Department prior to establishing overnight camping in vehicles and shall submit a site plan and any other documentation required by the department’s adopted procedures for ensuring compliance with this chapter.
- (3) A maximum of three vehicles is allowed at the registered site at any one time.
- (4) The religious institution shall provide campers with access to onsite sanitary facilities, including at minimum toilet, hand washing and trash disposal facilities.
- (5) The camping occurs on the same property as the religious institution’s facility or an adjacent property that the religious institution owns or leases and has land use approval for religious institutional uses. In the case of leased land, the church shall provide the County with written authorization from the property owner to establish vehicle camping.
- (6) No payment of fee, rent, or other monetary charge shall be required of campers. This provision does not prevent the religious institution from accepting donations.
- (7) The religious institution may select which individuals to allow to camp on the institution’s property, and may revoke this permission at any time and for any reason.
- (8) Vehicles and all associated outside facilities (such as toilet, trash disposal, storage unit) shall be located at least 12 feet from all property lines, road right-of-way or access easements, and each vehicle shall be located at least 12 feet from other vehicles and from associated outside facilities.
- (9) All items and materials must be stored in vehicles or in separate storage unit, other than items designed and intended for outdoor use which shall be screened from adjacent properties and public rights-of-way
- (10) The number of people camping per vehicle is not generally limited by this code; however, notwithstanding any other provision of this chapter, the Benton County Community Development Director or designee may limit the total number of individuals camping on a premises or prohibit vehicle camping as provided in this chapter if the Community Development Director or designee finds that such activity on the premises constitutes a nuisance or other threat to public health, safety, or welfare. In addition to any other penalties that may be imposed, any premises used for vehicle camping in a

manner not authorized by this chapter or other provisions of the Benton County Code shall constitute a nuisance and may be abated as such pursuant to Benton County Code Chapter 21 – Nuisance Abatement.

- (11) Upon expiration or revocation of this chapter, all vehicle camping on registered sites shall cease. Authorization of vehicle camping on a site does not establish a land use or a vested right to continue the activity if and when this code is modified.
- (12) Nothing in this chapter creates any duty on the part of the County, its employees, or its agents to ensure the protection of persons or property with regard to overnight sleeping in vehicles. {Ord. 2021-0305 establishes a sunset date of Dec. 31, 2022 for BCC ch. 40}