



MEDIA RELEASE
March 6, 2023

Virginia Park restrooms closed again due to theft and vandalism

Kern County has been forced to close the restrooms at Virginia Park again due to severe theft and vandalism.

On Thursday, March 2, Kern County Parks custodial staff discovered the locked public restroom building at Virginia Park was broken into overnight using a power tool to cut the locks. This criminal activity badly damaged the doors, including the locks to the utility room, which houses all plumbing and electrical equipment, as well as controls, for both the connected restrooms and entire park. Upon entering the building, custodial staff found all plumbing and electrical equipment critically damaged or removed altogether. Additionally, all maintenance and cleaning supplies used to keep the park and restroom clean, open, and accessible, were also stolen.

Due to this extensive vandalism, the Virginia Park restrooms have been rendered inoperable, deemed a public health and safety threat, and have been closed to the public for an indefinite period.

“Virginia Park should not be forgotten,” said Kern County Chief Administrative Officer Ryan Alsop. “That’s why today, we’re sharing this recent, while unfortunately not uncommon, information to ensure it is not. Providing a quality park for the residents surrounding this area is important. It’s unfortunate that the criminal activity of a few ruins this resource for the many.”

Kern County recently spent approximately \$29,000 to repair the Virginia Park restrooms following another long closure due to extensive vandalism. The County also invests another \$24,000 per year on daily custodial maintenance for these restrooms, and \$13,000 per year on security operations, which include the opening and closing and locking and unlocking of these restrooms daily.

In just the past few months alone, Kern County has dealt with 14 other vandalism instances at the Virginia Park restrooms, including various infrastructure and plumbing damages, as well as graffiti. These incidents cost County taxpayers \$6,000 to address.

“The County has budgeted \$1.44 million in improvements and upgrades at Virginia Park over the next 12 to 24 months,” said Alsop. “This includes a brand-new restroom facility, and complete renovation of the play area, including a new play structure, surfacing, and shading. Given the initial estimates I’m being given on the cost to repair the latest damage to the restrooms, we very likely will keep these facilities closed until they are completely rebuilt.”

If the public has any information that can help lead Kern County to those responsible for these recent crimes, please contact our Kern County Park Rangers, confidentially, at (661) 868-7016.

For further inquiries, please contact Ally Soper at (661) 308-6805.

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