

We want to get rid of the Graffiti Vandalism in our community, Now What do we do?

We are asked this question all the time, so we are placing the information here for you to use. The following information has been put together from a list of thousands of individuals in the Graffiti Abatement Field. We feel that this list is a bare bones requirement in order to have an effective abatement program.

- An 800 number for citizens to call in to report graffiti: Having a well publicized number that allows citizens to easily call in graffiti reports helps to get local citizens more involved in the community, and a feeling that there are able to help out their community. Another great tool is to use an online citizen reporting system, some cities have these now, and the GRIP database system has this designed in their database. It allows citizens to go online and report not only graffiti, but many other criminal acts or complaints. It can also be used to send in tips to local police. This is a great way to again, get citizen involvement in community affairs.
- A Database to record the calls/locations: As stated above, having a central database will assist you in not only tracking vandals, but will also allow you to maintain evidence of damage associated with each vandal. To be truly effective, an online database that can cover multiple cities is preferred so that other agencies have access to search for vandals that have tagged across city boundaries, to determine overall damage cost, but more importantly, to determine if a particular vandal may have already been identified by another agency.
- Digital photos of each location prior to being cleaned: It is very important to fully document each vandalism incident; a full report should be filled out with as much detail as possible. This should include victim information, any suspect information, investigating agency, investigator contact information, size or area of damage, and the estimated or actual cost to repair the damage. If you use one of the available online database systems, a GPS entry will allow you to see all on an area map, the points of vandalism caused any one vandal. This can sometimes show you an approximate area where that vandal lives, or better yet, what school they may attend. A quick check with school officials with a particular tag, sometimes leads to immediate identification.
- Database to hold these pictures as well as victim information, cost, suspect info: As stated above, a database to hold the information is crucial, but you also need to have a database that can store the photos as well. Several of the online Systems do this for you and are attached directly to the online incident of the suspect. You may contact us anytime.

- Graffiti must be removed within 24 hours with attention to removal within the first few hours around schools and high traffic areas: Experience has shown that vandals tag at night, and the next morning, they like to have their work viewed by all their friends. Remember, this is all about fame and being noticed among their peers. But if you have a graffiti abatement crew start early in the morning, then start by cleaning or painting over graffiti along the streets that lead to and from local schools and any main thoroughfares. This eliminates the fame from the vandals having their work seen by their peers. If you can get a crew out to start work at 4 or 5 am, it will really help in getting the graffiti removed prior to kids heading off to school. Additionally, your citizens will not see the graffiti when they go off to work, and this provides a better feeling from the citizens as they do not see detrimental graffiti every morning.
- Enlist the public in the fight/help. Make the City the Victim! Get signed permission slips from all property/business owners that allow the city to remove the graffiti. (This helps with not having trouble with multiple victims having to show up in court) It also helps with aggregating all the damage caused by a tagger into a single felony case vs. multiple misdemeanor cases) The City of Long Beach was the first city to use this place and in less than a year, they went from a city covered in graffiti, to a city nearly free from graffiti. This city used many of the above key aspects, as well as some of the following.
- You need a strong message from the City council and Mayor to the Police Chief that graffiti WILL BE a priority call and investigation. This is normally an area where graffiti programs are doomed to fail: This is the main key, without their support, you might as well pack up your gear as graffiti will eventually overtake the city, at which point they will have no choice but to take a stand against graffiti vandalism. But now you have a city that is in decline, crime appears to be out of control, local business owners see a reduction in people coming to shop their stores, and property values are in decline. It will now take a great deal of work to get back to square one. The Broken Windows Theory is a tried and true theory about what happens if you leave a broken window (or graffiti tag) unrepaired. Eventually it will lead to two, then three and so forth. We also now have studies that show graffiti as being a gateway crime to other criminal aspects. So taking a strong stand early on will help you avoid these pitfalls
- The police need to allocate at least one FULL time officer that is interested in Graffiti: OK, so you have a graffiti problem, now what, who is going to investigate this and try to find out who did it. Well this is a question that citizens ask us quite often. We tell them that most cities treat this crime as any other misdemeanor crime. Whichever Officer is up for a call, gets the call. The problem with this is that in order to effectively document and investigate this crime, an officer needs to have the training and experience. A lot of police agencies are now doing this, mainly due to the ever increasing problem of graffiti, and local citizen reactions to this crime.

- This Officer needs to be stationary and not moving from position to position. They need to have an interest and work it full time: Here is what happens, an officer is given the task of being the graffiti officer, he or she then starts researching graffiti, most of the time they will find us and we will provide them with information and connections to other investigators. They start learning the graffiti culture and become proficient in this area. Then the officer is reassigned due to manpower needs, promotes up to a better paying position, or is replaced on a standardized rotation. Guess what, we now start the process all over. So what have we gained? Not a lot! This is a continuing problem that we now have. We are starting to see some changes here, and Graffiti Officers are staying in those positions a lot longer, but we still see graffiti officer positions being used as a promotional opportunity for officers looking to promote to detective divisions.
- Public service messages advertising the graffiti hotline and requesting public support: Enlist the media; any news reports that advertize your hotline and that you take graffiti vandalism as a serious threat to the quality of life of your citizens. This will help keep the public informed about the problem, and it will help to let the citizens know that you are working hard on their behalf to curb the problem. Having awareness on their part to possible graffiti being done, will keep them looking and reporting these crimes.
- Free paint and roller/brushes to groups who want to do clean up and/or paint outs in their community: This is a great way to get the public to help out and take pride in their community. Many paint companies can and will donate paint to use, but remember that you need to try and match paint as best as possible, otherwise paint out may look just as bad as the original graffiti. If you can get a water blaster cleaning setup in addition to paint out crews and chemical cleaner crews, you have everything you need for a great abatement setup. Remember that these abatement crews should be taking information on the tags that they remove. Once again, being able to take a picture and then enter that data into a database for future use is essential.

Remember, Money is not always the best cure for the problem, community involvement and a dedication to eliminate the problem will go further than just paying to clean it.

By strongly supporting local community groups, you will get a lot more mileage than just paying for a cleanup crew.

Feel Free to contact us for more detailed information if you need
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