

TWO MOST COMMON FORMS OF GRAFFITI

Tagging Graffiti - Taggers gain fame and status within their subculture by marking their distinctive tags (monikers) in as many places as possible. They gain respect by the quality of their style and the quantity of tags. Part of the attraction to tagging is that it is illegal and risky. Taggers will often join crews to gain group notoriety as well. Some people will argue that tagging is “art,” but without permission from the property owner, it is vandalism.



Example of Tagger Graffiti

Gang Graffiti - Gang graffiti is done by gang members or people trying to prove themselves to a gang. It is done to mark territory, send messages, boast, and intimidate rival gangs and community residents. It can also make references to crimes that have occurred. Gang graffiti will often include nicknames and role calls (lists of members in the gang).



Example of Gang Graffiti
(Photo from www.streetgangs.com)

WARNING SIGNS FOR PARENTS



If your child is in possession of:

- Spray paint, large marking pens, spray paint nozzles, etching tools, etc.
- A large number of postal delivery stickers (used to make “slap tags”).

If your child has:

- Paint or marker stains on hands and finger tips.
- Tags on clothing, backpacks, bedroom walls, and school binders.
- Graffiti magazines, photographs, flyers, or “piece books” with graffiti sketches in them.
- Internet Web Browser with bookmarks to pro-graffiti websites and stores.
- Gang involvement or drawings.
- Prior arrests for vandalism or possession of graffiti tools.
- Friends who show these warning signs.

Talk to your children about graffiti and the importance of respecting other people’s property. Know their friends and where they are, particularly in the evening.

IMPORTANT PHONE NUMBERS

Graffiti Abatement (707) 543-3198
Report vandalism, become a volunteer, or get program information.

Police Department (707) 528-5222
Report graffiti in progress.

Public Works Department (707) 543-3499
Report graffiti on City road signs, streets, and sidewalks.

Parks Department (707) 543-3770
Report graffiti in City parks.

Utilities Department (707) 543-4200
Report graffiti on hydrants.

Transit Department (707) 543-3925
Report graffiti at City bus stops.

Sonoma County Sheriff’s Office (707) 565-7397
Report graffiti in County areas.

CalTrans (707) 762-6641
Report graffiti on the freeway, soundwalls, and highway signs.

North Bay Corporation (707) 586-1478
Report graffiti on garbage cans/bins.

Private Utilities
PG&E (800) 743-5000
Comcast (707) 588-5501
SBC (707) 575-2077

Organize Neighborhood Watch (707) 543-3653

GRAFFITI ABATEMENT PROGRAM



Graffiti is detrimental to the health, safety and welfare of the community in that it leads to urban blight, encourages gang activity, is detrimental to property values, business opportunities, and the enjoyment of life.



ABOUT GRAFFITI

Graffiti in Santa Rosa multiplied from 200 incidents in 1992 to 20,000 in 2005.

The City spends hundreds of thousands of dollars on graffiti abatement every year and that does not include costs paid by victimized private property owners. Nationwide, billions of dollars are spent annually on graffiti removal.

The presence of graffiti in a neighborhood:

- Increases residents' fears about their safety.
- Reduces property values.
- Signals to criminals that residents do not care about their neighborhood.
- Invites more serious crime.

GRAFFITI IS A CRIME

The Santa Rosa Police Department takes graffiti vandalism seriously and offenders are arrested.

Santa Rosa City Ordinance 3729 provides restrictions on the possession and sale of graffiti implements and also places responsibility on private property owners for the removal of graffiti on their property.

As the property owner or occupant, it is your responsibility to remove any graffiti from your property. City ordinances are not intended to punish victims but to ensure neighborhood safety, beauty, and property values are maintained.

Santa Rosa City Code Section 10-17.050: "It is unlawful for any owner of real property located in the City of Santa Rosa, or for any tenant, occupant, or user of any property therein, to maintain, permit or allow graffiti to exist thereon, for longer than 72 hours."

Santa Rosa City Code Section 10-17.080:

"Graffiti shall be removed or completely covered in a manner that renders it inconspicuous. When graffiti is painted out, the color used to paint it out shall match the original color of the surface..."

If graffiti is not removed and further complaints arise, the property owner may be subject to Code Enforcement action.

COMMUNITY RESPONSE

It is frustrating, time consuming, and disheartening to clean graffiti (especially more than once), but it is an essential element to an effective anti-graffiti strategy. The faster and more consistently graffiti is removed the more it signifies that an area is being monitored and cared for. It will take a community response to address this problem successfully.

VOLUNTEER GRAFFITI ABATEMENT

Contact Code Enforcement at (707) 543-3198 to report graffiti or become a volunteer. Graffiti on private property is the property owner's responsibility, but volunteers can assist when possible. There are many roles a volunteer can assume:

- **Graffiti Hotline Monitor** - One or two individuals who monitor the graffiti hotline on a daily basis and dispatch calls to Zone Leaders.
- **Zone Leader** - Individuals or small teams who monitor and adopt a larger area of the City and coordinate the work of Block/Area Leaders.
- **Block/Area Leaders** - Individuals or groups who adopt a block, neighborhood, or single location for graffiti removal.

Other potential assignments could include delivering supplies, organizing special graffiti removal projects, data entry or education.



Volunteers hard at work

REMOVAL TIPS

- Methods for removal include painting, sanding, scraping, chemical removers, power washing, sandblasting, and soda blasting.
- When painting, match the color. If the graffiti bleeds through, use a primer first.
- When painting over large structures like fences or walls, consider painting the entire surface so it is one uniform color and future vandalism can be covered quickly.
- Use scrapers to remove sticker tags from poles, boxes, etc. Chemical removers may be necessary to remove the adhesive backing.
- When using chemical graffiti removers, **ALWAYS** consult the Material Safety Data Sheet for safety precautions including, but not limited to, wearing appropriate safety equipment, knowing the safe exposure limits, and emergency procedures and treatment.
- Avoid letting removers set on the surface to be cleaned for too long.
- Power washing or sand blasting are often used when stone/concrete walls or wood fences have been spray painted. Power washing, like sanding, can wear down the underlying material, so it is important to remove as little as possible.
- In most cases, runoff or particulate matter from sand or power washing is considered an environmental hazard. Do not allow paint-contaminated material to flow into the storm drains, which flow directly to creeks.

WAYS TO DETER GRAFFITI

- **Remove graffiti within 24 hours after it appears.** The faster it is removed, the less likely it is to return.
- Restore the property to its pre-vandalism appearance. Patchwork jobs only *invite* more graffiti. Do not simply paint over the lines of the graffiti or it will still be legible. Consider using darker paint colors to make graffiti more difficult to see.
- Use graffiti resistant coatings on chronically vandalized surfaces.
- Provide well-maintained landscaping which makes the area inaccessible (i.e., thorny shrubs, bushes, or vines). Keep your property clean and cared for.



Effective use of landscaping to prevent graffiti

- Use exterior lighting (i.e., motion lights).
- Limit accessibility to high areas and objects vandals can climb on (i.e., move dumpsters away from walls and cover drainpipes).
- Control access to your property with fencing and barriers.
- Work with other businesses and neighbors to set up a Neighborhood Watch and look after one another's property.
- Report suspicious behavior and provide police with suspect descriptions. You can also anonymously report someone you believe is participating in gangs by calling (707) 543-GANG (4264).
- Report "in progress" graffiti to police by calling (707) 528-5222. Report graffiti and document it with a photo.