



# Graffiti Prevention Tips

Graffiti makes people feel less safe and secure whether living in the effected neighborhood, patronizing area businesses or simply passing through. As a result, businesses may have a decline in retail sales, and all property owners have a decline in property values and reduced quality of life because of the fear of crime.

## **How can I prevent or reduce the amount of graffiti?**

### 1. Aggressive maintenance

Work aggressively to keep the appearance of a property clean and neat. Properties that are neglected suggest apathy and attract vandals. Graffiti along with littered parking lots, broken fences, overgrown weeds and shrubs, poor lighting and overall poor maintenance suggest to vandals that the property owners are not attentive or do not care. These blighted properties can be reported to the Office of Central Inspection.

### 2. Quick removal

Quick and continued removal of graffiti is the best way to protect from the negative effects of graffiti. Graffiti that is not quickly removed sends a message to the vandals that the property owner does not care and often leads to additional vandalism. If the graffiti is gang related, opposing gangs will generally mark out rival gang graffiti with their own sending a negative message. The effected area can quickly become a message board for gangs and lead to more violent crimes if not removed quickly. Have paint and supplies on hand to remove graffiti from your property soon after it occurs, preferable within 24 hours.

### 3. Prevention through design

Properties that are frequently the target of graffiti should consider making it more difficult for vandals by their design. Some recommendations are to use shrubs, thorny plants and vines to restrict access. Consider adding additional lighting around the building to increase the vandal's chance of being seen and caught. Consideration should also be given to the use of security cameras and controlling the access to and from the property with fences, rails and natural barriers. Limit the access to roofs and elevated areas by removing dumpsters and other items away from exterior walls to prevent vandals from scaling them. Chain link fencing is nearly impossible for vandals to write on, as apposed to a wooden privacy fence. Anti-graffiti coatings are also available through many paint manufacturers and although they do not prevent the graffiti, they can make the clean up easier.

### 4. Partnerships

Partner with the others in the community to increase awareness of the problem and work toward some resolutions. Assist with community murals on chronically hit walls by donating your time, equipment or supplies to the effort. Support or participate in a community paint-out project. Businesses may print anti-graffiti messages on bags, flyers and other promotional items. Donate to a Crime Stoppers program that is targeting graffiti vandals. Never use actual graffiti images in any media or advertisement campaign; this gives vandals notoriety and respect among their peers.

## How do I report graffiti?

Notify the police immediately of the vandalism and offer the officers the opportunity to examine it. This allows the police to evaluate whether the graffiti is gang related. The police want to know what messages gangs are sending, which can lead to insight on the gang's future activities. After giving the police the opportunity to evaluate the graffiti, remove it quickly and completely. You can report graffiti to your police sub-station or by calling 911. If the vandalism is in progress or you suspect someone of suspicious activity use 911 to expedite the officer's response. If you are the property owner or an agent for a business we need your cooperation in seeking charges against suspects. Take a zero tolerance approach to the prosecution of these criminals!

## What if a property owner is not removing their graffiti?

City ordinance requires all property owners to remove graffiti. This must be accomplished within 7 days of written notification. If the property owner does not comply, the city will have a crew remove or paint over the graffiti and may access the cost to the owner, which if not paid could lead to a tax lien on the property. Report these properties to the Office of Central Inspection.

## What if I cannot afford to remove the graffiti?

It is highly recommended that property owners in frequently vandalized areas include graffiti removal efforts as part of their maintenance budget. Paint may be available from the Sedgwick County Waste Disposal facility free or a minimal cost. The city may elect to remove graffiti at no cost to the property owner after having obtained a waiver from the property owner. Property owners needing this service should contact the Office of Central Inspection for additional information and obtaining a waiver.

## How do I remove graffiti?

On a painted wall, simply paint over the graffiti using brushes, rollers or a sprayer. Painting over the same lines of graffiti simply changes the color. Completely paint out the entire surface area, preferably with a matching color so that you don't create a billboard effect on the wall. If the wall is unpainted such as brick or concrete, the wall may be either power washed or sand blasted to remove a layer of the material including the paint. Chemicals are also available to aid in the paint removal. Seek professional advice before using blasters and chemicals!

## Helpful Numbers

### Police

Patrol North	688-9500
Patrol South	337-9200
Patrol East	688-9331
Patrol West	941-0673

### Other

Office of Central Inspection	268-4481
Health Department	268-8351
Public Works	268-4595
Parks and Recreation	263-5437