

Gang Graffiti: A Community Threat

IN Gang Network

Graffiti: A Growing Problem

Graffiti is rarely reported to law enforcement for many reasons. Community members may not know whom to report new vandalism or many feel that the graffiti will continue to grow despite prevention efforts. It is important to address graffiti immediately.

Graffiti is a growing and persistent problem that negatively affects all states. While graffiti varies in severity in different regions, what is important to understand is graffiti attracts more graffiti and increases other types of crime.

The cumulative effect makes it easy for graffiti to spread into new communities that may not have experienced graffiti related crimes in the past.

The Threat of Gang Graffiti

Gang graffiti makes up only 10 percent of all graffiti reported in the United States. Unfortunately gang graffiti is however, the most dangerous and persistent form of vandalism, posing a much greater threat to communities than many other forms of criminal activity.

According to the U.S. Department of Justice, graffiti is not an isolated problem. Further criminal activity as a result of gang graffiti includes:

- Public disorder (i.e. littering, public urination, loitering);
- Shoplifting
- Gang activity and gang violence
- Property destruction



The National Association of Realtors states property value decreases by 15 percent in neighborhoods that have graffiti present. Neighborhoods also suffer from loss of business, lack of tourism, decrease in transit use, increase in delinquency, and decrease of public safety.

The Purpose of Gang Graffiti

The main purpose of graffiti is to glorify the gang. Graffiti causes intimidation to other gang members and community members. Types of messages used in gang graffiti include:

- Gang territory
- Declaration of alliances
- Advertisement of gang status, power, and success
- Threats, hits, and criminal activity that has or will occur
- Warnings of violence

"When a neighborhood is marked with graffiti indicating territorial dominance, the entire area and its inhabitants become targets for violence."

- Los Angeles Police Department

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Youth Gang Graffiti

Did you know 85 % of graffiti vandals are male? The majority of youth that participate in gang graffiti are between the ages of 12 and 21. Factors that contribute to youth participation in criminal gang activity, specifically graffiti vandalism include:

- Too much unsupervised free time. Youth are often unsupervised between the times of 3 p.m. and 6 p.m.. allowing the child to participate in gang activity.
- Lack of parental supervision and involvement. Parents should participate in activities with their child.
- Lack of positive outlets. Engage youth in supervised extra curricular activities.
- Gang involvement is a major contributing factor to youth gang graffiti vandalism.

The Purpose of Gang Graffiti

Graffiti is one of the first signs that a street gang is present in your neighborhood. Gang graffiti glorifies the gang often depicting images, colors, and phrases often used by the gang. Gangs use graffiti to mark their turf, indicate future criminal activity or crimes that have already been committed, threaten other gangs, demonstrate punishment to own members, indicate confrontation between gangs, and act as a memorial site for fallen members.



Prevent Gang Graffiti

1. **Zero Tolerance** — The most effective way to prevent graffiti is to have it removed within 24 to 48 hours. Do not allow graffiti to remain on display as graffiti attracts more graffiti. The main purpose of gang graffiti is to relate gang related messages and threats. Constant removal of graffiti makes it hard for gangs to continually tag in that area.
2. **Partner with Local Law Enforcement** — Report graffiti to law enforcement immediately.
3. **Documentation** — Graffiti should be documented before removal. Take pictures of the graffiti images and document where and when the graffiti was tagged.
4. **Beautification** — Adding trees, shrubs, plants, and decoration to private or commercial resident locations can help detract taggers from vandalizing that area. This can also prevent access to vandals.
5. **Neighborhood Programs** — Work with different neighborhood organizations to help remove graffiti and create awareness to other community members.



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Encourage your local law enforcement to become members of INGangNetwork. INGangNetwork assists law enforcement and criminal justice agencies working with local communities to help reduce and track gang activity.



For more information on gang activity, to view downloadable safety brochures and products, and to learn how you can get involved visit INGangNetwork at:
www.in.gov/iifc/2329.htm