

tipped markers to customers under the age of 18 and do not display these items where they might be vulnerable to shoplifting. They post warning signs about the penalties for graffiti vandalism.

- ▶ Coordinate a graffiti awareness campaign in your community. Educate potential graffiti artists about the legal consequences of graffiti vandalism: the vandal's driver's license may be suspended, and fines—or even jail time—may be the result of future offenses. Victims of graffiti may sue the perpetrator's parents, and the parents may be fined or ordered to provide restitution.
- ▶ Encourage anyone you think might be tempted to do graffiti to check out art schools instead or to get involved by doing posters, murals, and other art projects at their schools.
- ▶ Involve the media. Distribute information about the harm graffiti vandalism can do to a community. But caution them not to display the work. Graffiti vandals want their work to be seen and publicizing graffiti only encourages them.
- ▶ Contact Keep America Beautiful (www.kab.org) to see what you can do to make your community beautiful and crime free.

GRAFFITI IS EVERYBODY'S PROBLEM



NATIONAL CRIME PREVENTION COUNCIL

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The National Citizens' Crime Prevention Campaign, sponsored by the Crime Prevention Coalition of America, is substantially funded by the Bureau of Justice Assistance, Office of Justice Programs, U.S. Department of Justice.

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Production was made possible by a grant from ADT Security Services, Inc., a unit of Tyco Fire & Security Services.



TAKE A BITE OUT OF
CRIME



graffiti costs American

communities more than \$8

billion per year. It hurts property

values, drives away business, and sends

the message that nobody cares about

the community. Graffiti is everybody's

problem. Here's what you can do to help.

Report It

- Report graffiti immediately. The sooner it is reported, the sooner it can be removed.
- If you see graffiti in progress, report it—don't try to intervene. Some places have graffiti hotlines or tiplines, which usually offer anonymity to people reporting crimes.
- Encourage everyone in the community to report graffiti as soon as it happens.
- Contact the property owner whose building has been vandalized by graffiti. Stress the importance of quick cleanup. Form a neighborhood group to help property owners clean up graffiti quickly.
- Take a photo of the graffiti. It may provide information that will lead to identification of the vandal.

Remove It

- Removing graffiti promptly (within the first 24 hours if possible) is the best way to prevent it. Prompt, persistent removal usually results in a nearly zero rate of recurrence. Before any graffiti removal begins, however, find out whether the police want to photograph it as evidence.
- Paint a mural over the graffiti if the site is suitable. Involve the community in painting a mural to celebrate the history of the community or its diversity. (Ask local paint companies to donate the supplies.) Vandals seldom put graffiti on murals.
- When painting over graffiti, save some of the paint for touchups in the event of future vandalism.
- Some municipal governments have guidelines

for removing graffiti. Check with your local government.

- Look in the Yellow Pages (under "Graffiti Removal") or on the Web for companies that specialize in cleaning up graffiti.
- Check your local laws. In some jurisdictions, property owners are given a certain time period in which they must remove graffiti, after which a violation can be issued.

Prevent It

- Rapid removal is one of the best ways to prevent future graffiti. Removing graffiti tells the vandals that people care about the community and that their work has little chance of being seen.
- Plain smooth surfaces invite graffiti. For walls, choose patterned and rough concrete surfaces or tiled or mosaic surfaces; for fences, use chain, lattice, or wooden picket fences.
- Choose paints and coatings to deter graffiti. Dark colors make graffiti harder to see. Anti-graffiti coatings are available as well. A sacrificial coating is one that can be easily removed if graffiti artists strike. A protective coating can be easily cleaned.
- Plant trees, shrubs, or climbing vines to restrict access to tempting walls. Plants with thorns or strong scents are good deterrents.
- Use good lighting to deter vandals from popular graffiti sites.
- Encourage community groups to adopt a wall or area to keep it clean, well maintained, and graffiti free.
- Encourage local merchants who sell paint and painting supplies to become responsible retailers. Responsible retailers observe existing laws against selling spray paint and broad-