



PREVENTING VANDALISM

→ FROM SPRAY-PAINTED STREET SIGNS TO BROKEN LIGHTS, IT'S EVERYONE'S PROBLEM

What is Vandalism?

Vandalism is the willful destruction or defacing of property. Some example of vandalism include:

- Graffiti covered walls
- Spray-painted or destroyed mailboxes and garbage cans
- Broken street lights
- Spray-painted street signs
- Broken public telephones
- Broken fixtures, doors and stalls in public restrooms
- Shoe-polished cars

The High Price of Vandalism

Vandalism is expensive to repair. It makes our communities unattractive and unsafe.

Local government and taxpayers pay the bills for broken street lights, damaged signs, and vandalized parks. We pay higher taxes and services are cut to pay for damage caused by vandalism.

Schools pay millions of dollars each year to clean up graffiti, repair buildings and replace vandalized equipment - money that could be used to buy new sports equipment or computers.

Businesses pass on the costs of vandalism to customers through higher prices. Some businesses are forced to move to different neighborhoods, taking good shopping out of your community.

The Cost is More Than Money

Victims of vandalism often feel angry, hurt and even frightened when something of theirs - a mailbox, a bicycle, a vehicle door- is destroyed for no reason.

Vandalism claims other victims as well. For example, someone in need of help cannot dial 911 because the pay phone is broken or people getting lost because street signs are missing or covered with graffiti.

Graffiti

Graffiti is defined as unauthorized writing or drawing on a public surface. From obscene or violent language scrawled on a public bathroom door to elaborate murals on a brick wall, graffiti takes in many forms. But it's all the same: if it's not on the artist's property, it's vandalism and it's a crime.

Graffiti is often the first sign that gangs are taking over a neighborhood. Gangs' "taggers" act as messengers for the gang, use graffiti to mark their turf, advertise their exploits, and challenge or threaten rival gangs.

Graffiti gives criminals the impression that residents don't care about their neighborhood, and a neighborhood that doesn't care is an easy target for crime.

What You Can Do

- Take pride in your surroundings. Vandalism cheapens your area and your property.
- Learn about the costs and effects of vandalism by working with law enforcement, school officials and community leaders.
- Teach what you learn to your neighbors.
- Make sure graffiti is removed as soon as possible. It takes persistence, but by working with law enforcement and other residents, you can keep your neighborhood clean and the effects of vandalism to a minimum.
- Volunteer to help businesses and homeowners repair their property as soon as it is vandalized and paint over graffiti.
- Work with your faith community to adopt a street or a park with your local school or civic group. Plant trees, bushes, and flowers. Repair equipment and install trash containers. Organize a monthly outing to clean up garbage and keep an eye on things.
- Report graffiti immediately to the police.
- If you see graffiti in progress, report it; don't try to intervene.

Prevention Tips

- Use good lighting to reduce a vandal's opportunity to strike.
- Plant trees, shrubs or climbing vines to restrict access to tempting walls. Use thorny plants or ones with strong scents as a deterrent to graffiti artists.
- Choose patterned and rough concrete surfaces for walls. Use chain, lattice or wooden picket fences. These surfaces are not conducive to graffiti.

(Information updated March 2026)