

GRAFFITI.....how to report it, remove it, prevent it, and... what is it?

Graffiti is a crime! To report graffiti in Rochester, contact the Rochester Police Department:

- **If you see someone committing this crime, call 911. Give the location and a description of the vandal.**
- **If you're the victim of vandalism, call 330-7127, the Rochester Police Department's non-emergency line.**
- **Anonymous tips can be phoned into Rochester Crime Line at 335-6500. Crime Line offers rewards of up to \$1,000 for various crimes.**

FACTS ABOUT GRAFFITI:

Graffiti is vandalism! Graffiti is a crime in Rochester!

Graffiti - the plural of the Italian word "graffito" - simply means words or drawings scratched or scribbled on a wall. The word is derived from the Greek term "graphein," meaning, "To write."

Today, the term graffiti is used if it appears on property without permission. The term originated in the late 1960's although unsolicited markings have been around forever. Each year, millions of dollars are spent cleaning up graffiti from neighborhoods across the country.

Some consider graffiti art. However, defacing public or private property is not a form of accepted art. Graffiti lowers neighborhood appeal, lowers property values, drives away prospective homebuyers, attracts prostitution, and can lead to other criminal activity such as drug dealing and shoplifting in the area. Paying attention to smaller quality-of-life issues, such as graffiti, pays big dividends and can prevent the downward slide of society.

Graffiti can come in many forms:

- + Stickers: scrape away as much of the sticker as possible. Use nail polish remover or acetone-based cleaner to remove gummy residue.
- + Etching: some graffiti removal contractors offer scratch removal for glass. Look in the Yellow pages under "Glass Repair" for a contractor. Sometimes it is necessary to replace the glass. The most difficult types of graffiti to deal with are acid etchings because surface restoration can be expensive.

There are four styles of graffiti: - tagger/hip hop, gang, hate and generic.

* **Gang:** gang graffiti is dangerous. Graffiti is how gangs identify "turf". This type of graffiti may spell out a gang name, their geographic area, or a numeric identifier. It can sometimes show an entire list of gang nicknames called a "roll call" or "roster." Gang graffiti serves several purposes, all of which is understood by other "gangbangers," even members of rival sets. Graffiti has been called the newspaper or bulletin boards for gangs, and communicates many messages, including violent challenges, warnings, and pronouncements of deeds accomplished or about to occur.

* **Tagger or Hip Hop:** Tagger or Hip Hop graffiti is the most prevalent in New Hampshire. Tagger graffiti vandals like to be called "graffiti writers". Graffiti is a culture or a way of life for most graffiti writers. Graffiti writers gain recognition and status from their peers by placing distinctive "tags or

graffiti monikers" in as many places as possible, in the most high-risk places, and by how artistic the graffiti is. The intent is for other graffiti writers to see the graffiti. There are basically three types of graffiti classified as tagger graffiti.

* **Hate:** This type of graffiti expresses messages of hate against some members or groups within a community. Quite often, these are either expressed in symbols, or in short messages putting down someone's race, religion or ethnicity.

* **Generic:** Generic graffiti is usually innocent in nature, yet carries the same expensive price tag for removal. Often expressions of love (Johnny loves Suzy), school name/year of graduation (Spaulding HS Class of 2005). Defacing public and private property with unauthorized markings also fall within this category.

PREVENTING GRAFFITI:

* Report any suspicious behavior to the police at once. If you see someone about to write graffiti or commit any other crime, dial 911 immediately. You may report anonymous tips about graffiti vandals to Rochester Crime Line 335-6500 for rewards up to \$1,000.

Protect Your Property:

- Keep your property well maintained. Remove graffiti immediately after receiving confirmation from the police.
- Plant clinging vegetation, like ivy, to protect walls and other large flat surfaces. Plant thorny or thick bushes or place fences in front of large walls.
- Eliminate anything that could encourage loitering after hours (benches, payphones, etc.).
- Limit access to roofs - move commercial dumpsters away from walls and cover drainpipes to prevent vandals from scaling them.
- When painting your property, consider darker colors that are less attractive to graffiti vandals. Increase lighting around your property; use motion detectors to draw attention to movement.
- Textured walls are a deterrent to graffiti writers. Consider texturing outside walls if you are a regular victim of graffiti.
- Consider applying a protective coating to provide a barrier between your property's surface and the graffiti. Several different brands and prices are available.

Organize your neighborhood and community against vandalism:

There are many advantages when block clubs, neighborhood organizations, and other groups band together to protect their environment:

- Form a neighborhood graffiti removal crew and help those who are not able to do so themselves.

- Get neighborhood businesses to sponsor clean-up and prevention efforts.
- Create a watch force for areas frequently vandalized.
- Involve community youth in removing graffiti.
- Help identify and apprehend graffiti writers involved in graffiti.
- Question teen requests for spray paint purchases! If teenagers approach you, or your own children requesting to purchase spray paint, find out how the paint is being used before you purchase the paint.
- Be a good role model and teach children and youth: responsibility and respect for themselves, their environment, and the property of others. They need to know that graffiti on private and public property is illegal and disrespectful.
- Take pride in our community: parents, teachers, and community leaders are needed to help deter graffiti writers. For graffiti writers, including some youth, graffiti becomes a way of life with its own code of conduct, jargon, and aesthetic standards. Tagging is known to lead to shoplifting and other crimes.

REMOVING GRAFFITI:

* A variety of effective graffiti removal products for different surfaces are available at local hardware and paint stores. Here are some general suggestions, but read the manufacturer's instructions carefully since some products can be toxic. Newer products are biodegradable and less toxic.

- ✓ Painted Surfaces (wood, concrete, stucco, etc.): Apply a stain-killing primer or pigmented shellac. This will keep the graffiti from bleeding through fresh paint. Repaint surface with a color that closely matches the original surface.
- ✓ Unpainted surfaces (brick, cement, stone etc): Use extra-strength paint remover or graffiti remover. Apply with a wire brush, allow to set, and then rinse with water.
- ✓ Stucco: Use paint remover, wash off with a high-pressure water hose. Or use stucco paint to thoroughly cover graffiti.
- ✓ Metal, aluminum siding, fiberglass: Use carburetor cleaner or use paint remover sparingly; rinse carefully.
- ✓ Vinyl Siding: use caution because solvents may work too aggressively and remove the vinyl coating. Use paint remover sparingly. Use a clean rag and keep applying the clean dry rag with every light wipe. If the solvent is allowed to stay for even a short period of time, it will penetrate and you may have to repaint. Use primer to match and then matching paint to adhere to the vinyl for restoration.
- ✓ Glass, Plexiglas: use carburetor cleaner.