



NEIGHBORHOOD WATCH NEWS

Volume 17, Issue 8

West Valley Senior Lead Office (818) 374-7630
Sergeant Frank Avila

August 2013

WHAT'S THE GRAFFITI CODE?

**Learn the "Secret Code"
Come to the next CPAB Meeting!**

August 14, 2013 – 7:00 pm

**West Valley LAPD Station
19020 Vanowen St., Reseda - Ann Kinzle Community Room
Refreshments**

What is Graffiti?

Graffiti means "any inscriptions, words, figures or designs that are marked, etched, scratched, drawn, painted, pasted or otherwise affixed to the surface of the property." We see graffiti applied to everything from fences and buildings to school desks and notebooks.

A distinction can be made between property damage by gangs and that of "taggers". Gang-related graffiti is used by gang members to mark their territory, list members, or send warnings to rival gangs. Tagging is damage that is not gang-related and it includes more random markings, initials, and various social commentary.

How Does Graffiti Hurt A Community?

Graffiti, whether gang-related or not, has a negative effect on a resident's feeling of safety in their neighborhood. It creates a perception (whether factual or not) that crime is on the rise and gangs are moving into the area.

When graffiti appears and is left up indefinitely, it sends a signal that people just don't care, which in turn attracts other forms of crime and delinquency to the neighborhood.

Graffiti drains tax dollars. Funds that could and should be used for schools, streets, parks, and other community needs, are used to clean graffiti.

ENCINO:

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Contact Officer Trulik for information on the next Encino Neighborhood Watch Meeting.

What Graffiti Means to A Community

The more social disorder and graffiti in a neighborhood, the louder the message is sent that "nobody cares." This sets off a vicious cycle that encourages further crime in affected neighborhoods.

Most vandals are young people, from grade school age to young adults, who damage property for reasons of boredom, anger or revenge. Others vandalize to show defiance toward rules, laws and authority or to draw attention to a "cause." Graffiti is often the first sign that gangs are taking over a neighborhood. Gangs use graffiti as their street "telegraph," sending messages about turf and advertising their exploits. Graffiti identifies territorial boundaries, lists members, and communicates threats to rival gangs.

Each year millions of dollars are spent to clean up graffiti. Communities can adopt a zero tolerance policy for vandalism. The first step is to identify locations or objects prone to graffiti and to teach property owners effective removal methods. Participants should include property owners victimized by graffiti, schools, government, businesses, recreation facilities, public transportation, utilities, public works, and shopping malls among others.

Beautification projects such as trash cleanups, landscape enhancements, and gardens also serve as a focus for community organizing. Community groups working with law enforcement, public works, or parks and recreation staff clean up public areas and abandoned lots. The project may reclaim a public space for neighborhood use, establish new green space, or mark neighborhood boundaries. The Los Angeles Police Department has a number of such projects.

A community's first step in taking back its streets is getting rid of graffiti immediately. This power struggle cannot be won overnight, but persistent communities working in partnership with law enforcement almost always emerge as victors. Once the graffiti is gone, use landscape designs (such as prickly shrubs or closely planted hedges), building materials (such as hard-to-mark surfaces), lighting, or fences to discourage vandalism. This philosophy, known as Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design, can help diminish the possibility of graffiti by changing landscaping, lighting, fencing, etc.

LAKE BALBOA:

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Contact Officer Ham or Officer Olivares for information on the next Lake Balboa Neighborhood Watch Meetings.

You Can Take a Stand to Prevent Graffiti and Vandalism

- Educate the public, especially young people, about the costs of vandalism.
- Clean up vandalism as soon as it happens – replace signs, repair playground equipment, paint over graffiti.
- If you see anyone committing vandalism, report it to the police, school authorities, or someone who can take action. Remember, vandalism is a crime.
- Protect your house or apartment from vandalism by using good lighting, locking gates and garages.
- Support recreational programs for young people in your community.
- Volunteer your time, donate money or supplies, and help in any way you can.
- Involve young people in all vandalism prevention efforts.
- Organize a graffiti clean-up project in your neighborhood. Work with Neighborhood Watch and ask the city or a local business for cleaning supplies and paint.
- Work with schools or the arts community to paint murals on areas that are vulnerable to graffiti. Make it a contest for teens.
- Adopt a street or park, perhaps in cooperation with a church or business. Plant trees, bushes and flowers. Repair equipment and install trash containers.
- Organize a monthly park patrol to clean up litter and keep an eye on things.
- Utilize the hotline to report vandalism.
- Have a community meeting on vandalism to discuss its victims, costs and solutions.

RESEDA:

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Next Neighborhood Watch Meeting – September 12, 2013 at 7:00 p.m.
Ann Kinzle Community Room,
located in the West Valley Community Police Station.

What Should I do About Graffiti in my Neighborhood?

Report Graffiti—Your local law enforcement agency is very interested in documenting graffiti as a means to track criminal activity, including gangs. Your report may help prevent more serious crimes!

When Graffiti Is "Occurring Now"—If you are a witness to graffiti vandalism as it is happening, call 911. Give as much information as you can about the suspects and the location.

When Graffiti appears on your property or someone else's—If you see that graffiti has been put up in the neighborhood, report it to your local law enforcement agency as soon as possible by calling the non-emergency dispatch number at (877) 275-5273. This allows police officers that serve your area to document the location.

In Any Case—**THE SOONER GRAFFITI IS REMOVED THE BETTER!** Research shows that removal within 24-48 hours is effective in discouraging repeat vandalism. If you choose to remove the graffiti before contacting law enforcement, take a photo, if possible, that can be given to the officer and attached to the report. If the graffiti appears on someone else's property and you believe they may be unaware, consider contacting them directly. You will be acting as a "good neighbor" by letting them know and also making sure they understand the importance of quick removal. Information appears below of where to call for removal.

TARZANA:

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Contact Officer Scoggins for information on the next Tarzana Neighborhood Watch Meeting.

WEST VALLEY ALLIANCE

GRAFFITI REMOVAL

**TO HAVE GRAFFITI REMOVED
(AT NO CHARGE TO YOU):**

CALL (818) 885-8885
FAX (818) 885-8886

E-MAIL: wvalleyalliance@sbcglobal.net

Please report a specific address and the cross street.

(Boundaries covered by West Valley Alliance are from the 405 Freeway west to Valley Circle Blvd., and from Mulholland Drive to just north of the 118 Freeway.)