

Graffiti Information

Why does graffiti exist?

Graffiti exists for a variety of reasons. The graffiti St. Louis Park we have been seeing has not been gang-related. It can be caused by a common tagger, artistic taggers, gangs or it can simply be an isolated incident. The common tagger is someone who likes to tag in high-volume, accessible locations, where there is high visibility, and may draw stylized but simple nicknames. Conventional graffiti is oftentimes spontaneous, isolated youthful acts. The motive is for notoriety and/or defiance of authority, excitement, play, etc. There are many theories out there on why graffiti exists.

How does graffiti affect a neighborhood?

Graffiti can lead to an overall psychological and physical decline of a neighborhood. Graffiti is vandalism and destruction of property, and if not removed promptly, can be interpreted as a sign of low neighborhood pride.

Materials used to apply graffiti

Materials used to apply graffiti include spray paint, grease pencils, felt-tipped pens, water-based paints, stickers, shoe polish, and even crayons. Keep these materials in safe, locked places, and allow your children to use them under direct adult supervision only.

Graffiti removal

Graffiti should be removed as quickly as possible after it's discovered. There is a direct correlation between length of time prior to removal and the rate of reoccurrence.

If you are a victim of graffiti, contact the police department's non-emergency phone number, 952.924.2618. An officer will come out and document the incident. If you do not want to wait to remove the graffiti, take pictures before removal. Then, call the police department's non-emergency line so an officer can come and retrieve the pictures for documentation.

By keeping accurate reports of graffiti, police are better able to track and find the people who are involved in the vandalism. You may also contact the City of St. Louis Park inspections department for removal tips and information on city requirements for removal.

Graffiti cleanup

Graffiti removal methods vary based on the surface it is on. Consult a cleanup contractor or hardware store for your specific needs.

Warning: Many graffiti cleanup products are toxic. Read manufacturer directions and protect yourself and others from these products.

Graffiti is easiest to remove immediately. Delayed cleanup often requires harsher solvents, more scrubbing and a greater chance of damage to the vandalized surface. Below are cleanup tips for a variety of surfaces.

- **Concrete, brick or cement** — Use extra strength paint remover. Apply with a wire brush and allow to dry. Rinse with water. Repeat if necessary.

- **Stucco** — Apply extra strength paint remover. Seal area with primer, such as KILZ, and paint over with stucco paint.
- **Vinyl siding** — Use paint remover sparingly. Test first on a small area that is not as visible. Use a small amount and wipe each time with a clean rag. Repaint if necessary. Clean promptly to avoid damage.
- **Aluminum siding** — Use "Goof-off" or "Oops" for latex paints. Oil paints may be cleaned with paint remover, but use sparingly and test first on a small area.
- **Unpainted wood** — Remove with paint thinner and re-stain/varnish.
- **Painted wood** — Seal with a stain killing primer such as "KILZ" and repaint.
- **Glass and plexiglas surfaces** — Use carburetor cleaner and a clean rag.
- **Metal** — Use carburetor cleaner. If this does not work, use paint thinner.

Purchase the above products at home improvement, hardware or paint stores. Contractors can also be hired for graffiti cleanup.

Prevention tips

- For exposed concrete walls, consider growing vines or ivy to cover the wall.
- Use dark paint on walled surfaces; graffiti does not show up well against a dark background.
- Plant prickly or spiny shrubs adjacent to walls to discourage access.
- Use graffiti-resistant coatings and protectants on exterior surfaces.
- Report suspicious activity immediately to the police.

Graffiti reporting process

- **Call 911** if you see graffiti in process.
- **Report** — Before removing the graffiti, call 952.924.2618 and request that a police officer come to your property to make a report. The responding officer will file a report and photograph the damage.
- **Document** — Take your own photos of the graffiti damage for your records. Ask the police officer for the case number. Contact your insurance company to see if the damage is covered.
- **Remove** — Completely and quickly remove the graffiti. Quick removal is the most effective deterrent. The operations and recreation department works to clean up graffiti on public property immediately.
- **City process** — The police department enters each graffiti case into a database which is used to track graffiti incidents by location, "tag", etc. We work with other city departments and other agencies to identify and charge the perpetrators.