



Graffiti Prevention & Control

“To a graffiti writer, a blank wall in the city represents many more bad things than any writing on it could. Blank walls are ugly and repressive”.

– A graffiti writer on the Internet

As the above sentiment suggests, people who write graffiti see the world as a very different place from those who don't.

As uncontrolled graffiti can start a cycle of fear and decay, it is important that people have a basic understanding of graffiti and know the best ways to control it.

TAGGING vs WRITING

Most graffiti is the work of “taggers” and “writers”. Taggers engage in the most basic forms of graffiti, which generally involves a personal, stylized (difficult to read) signature. Taggers are generally motivated to get their signature (or tag), “up” as many times as possible. Tags within our Region, are seldom gang related.

Writers are generally responsible for the more artistic forms of graffiti. Graffiti writers often work in small groups called crews and have been known to take significant risks for the purpose of displaying their ‘art’ in highly visible spots. Writers can be competitive amongst themselves, which can result in the proliferation of graffiti.

WHY GRAFFITI PREVENTION & CONTROL IS SO IMPORTANT

James Q. Wilson, the author of the Broken Windows Theory, stated:

“What really made people afraid in cities and concerned about their welfare, was not the crimes they saw or heard about, but also the physical

and social signs they saw around them, registering a breakdown in society”.

Unauthorized graffiti, while often unreported, is a Criminal Offence that:

- annually costs taxpayers hundreds of thousands of dollars,
- defaces structures and vehicles,
- results in the cancellation of school programs when funds are spent removing graffiti,
- generates fear, and
- leads to more serious crime.

Aside from the obvious economic costs and loss of social and economic activity, undesired and unremoved graffiti sends a strong message, that private property is not respected and no one really cares. In order to correct this perception, it is vital that you clear graffiti from your property as soon as possible in the event it happens.

Graffiti is contrary to your community's property standards by-law and, if not removed, may result in a visit from your local property standards officer and an order issued to remove it.

Graffiti should never be confused as an issue of art; it is an issue of permission.

GRAFFITI PREVENTION

The best way to prevent graffiti is to never let it happen. This is best accomplished at the design stage by using textured surfaces or limiting the surfaces available to write on.

Where the environment has been already built, graffiti is best prevented by ensuring proper maintenance and the strategic use of:

- plant materials,
- murals, and
- where circumstances dictate, protective coatings over walls.

For best results, ivies and plant species with thorns should be used. Avoid large plantings where they block sightlines around windows and doors, or create hidden spots next to walkways.

GRAFFITI CONTROL

TIMELY CLEAN-UP

In the event that you are the victim of graffiti, timely clean-up will stop its spread and limit its recurrence. Graffiti taggers and writers are unlikely to return to locations that do not offer a good payback for their risk, time and money (artistic pieces may require up to 20 cans of spray paint).

Timely clean-up will further:

- save you money in the long run,
- demonstrate ownership of your property,
- ensure that your property complies with property standard by-laws,
- maintain the value of your property,

FOR MORE INFORMATION ON THIS SUBJECT, PLEASE CONTACT:

PEEL REGIONAL POLICE
Crime Prevention Services
 7750 Hurontario Street
 Brampton, Ontario
 L6V 3W6

Tel. 905-453-2121 ext. 4021
 Fax 905-456-6106

You may also want to examine our Internet site at:

www.peelpolice.ca

- make the task of graffiti removal easier, and,
- discourage undesirable activity.

For assistance in obtaining environmentally friendly graffiti removal consult: Building Cleaning - Exterior, in your local Yellow Pages, or, check out graffiti removal on the internet.

GRAFFITI REMOVAL TIPS

There are four factors to consider prior to removing graffiti. They are:

- type of paint/marker,
- age of graffiti,
- type of surface,
- removal method.

Paints are generally the most difficult medium to remove, while **felt tipped markers** can generally be removed using a graffiti removal (chemical based) product available at hardware stores.

If the adhesive in paint has had time to cure it can become very difficult to remove depending on how porous the surface is. Generally speaking, **metal or painted surfaces** are easiest to clean while **non-pressure treated wood, plastic and brick** are much more difficult.

For best results it is essential to choose the removal method that will:

- minimize the chances of graffiti returning, and
- do minimal damage to the structure being cleaned.

GRAFFITI REMOVAL OPTIONS INCLUDE:

- Sanding (wood)
- Chemical (most hard/painted surfaces)
- High Pressure washer with soda/lime introduced (any surface that can be hosed down —requires special equipment)
- Painting (painted surfaces or surfaces that can be colour matched)
- Murals
- Sandblasting (stone—never use on brick)

It is important to note that graffiti vandals are often attracted to small painted over areas used to spot cover graffiti. For best results, the **entire** surface should be painted or it

should be colour matched using a computerized system. Where painting the entire surface is not an option or colour matching is not possible, a different removal option should be chosen.

ENFORCEMENT

If you see someone spreading graffiti, or believe that graffiti is gang or hate related, contact police immediately. Do not remove gang or hate graffiti without first having it examined.

For further information contact Peel Regional Police Crime Prevention Services, or your local by-law enforcement property standards office.

- Mississauga.....905-896-5655
- Brampton905-874-2400

Your local property standards office can help keep your neighbourhood graffiti free by following up on complaints of graffiti.

WHY IT’S IMPORTANT TO TELL IF MY CHILD IS INVOLVED WITH GRAFFITI?

People engaged in graffiti run the risk of significant legal and health problems (this is particularly true of graffiti writers who inhale spray paint or take unnecessary risks, such as climbing onto rooftops and structures for the purpose of exposing their work). In some cases, the parents of graffiti taggers and writers have had to pay thousands of dollars, on behalf of their children, in restitution damages.

WHAT SHOULD YOU LOOK FOR

The following are telltale signs of graffiti taggers and writers. Do your teens have:

- black permanent markers or scribes (used for scratching graffiti into glass),
- heavily tagged property, including furniture and rooms,
- piece books (where graffiti ideas are sketched),
- a collection of “Krylon” spray cans and nozzles often kept in a backpack,
- spray paint residue on fingers and clothes, particularly after regular dawn or dusk outings with friends,
- an interest in graffiti magazines and videos.

NOTES
