

Preventing Vandalism

Vandalism is a criminal act against property that entails the deliberate destruction or defacement of public or private property. It includes such actions as breaking lights or windows, damaging phone booths or street signs, bending car antennas, spraying graffiti, and breaking or damaging public restrooms.

When individuals damage your property, it affects you on a personal level. You may feel violated and wonder how it could have happened to you. While vandalism hurts -- and not only in the pocketbook -- there are ways that you can help prevent it. Like other crimes against property and people, the first step to preventing vandalism is having an understanding of the crime.



Vandalism is a crime of opportunity. It occurs most often at night, when fewer people are around and property isn't under as much scrutiny. However, it can take place at any time of the day or night and in any season. It occurs most frequently in the evening during summer and fall and on weekday evenings. Vandalism tends to decline during winter months when individuals spend less time outside and on Saturdays and Sundays when public buildings and open spaces are under greater scrutiny.

As with most crimes, the greatest deterrents are:

- Noise
- Time
- Visibility

If a vandal has a good chance of being seen, has a high chance of being heard while committing the act, or has little time to vandalize property and get away, the individual is less likely to vandalize property.

Vandalism happens everywhere, but it most often occurs where the vandal has little chance of being seen. For example, it frequently occurs

- Where a building's design and lighting offers concealment and anonymity
- In areas that young people frequent such as schools, parks, shopping plazas and public buildings
- In unoccupied buildings, open spaces or parked vehicles where minimum surveillance is given to property

People who own property that vandals have damaged or destroyed usually see red -- red rage and red ink

As a citizen, your taxes and purchases pay for the damage that vandals cause. Because of these costs, many public entities must curtail educational and recreational programs to absorb the expense of repairing or replacing property. Private businesses may simply raise prices.

What You Can Do

Businesses pay millions of dollars each year to repair vandalism, and they eventually pass on these costs to customers through higher prices. If you are a business owner, you can prevent vandalism in the following ways:

Become aware of the costs of vandalism -- dollars and otherwise. Talk with neighboring businesses about ways to prevent vandalism. Ask police for assistance in setting up a vandalism deterrence program. Discourage those you see about to damage something. Clean up your property -- debris can be tools for vandals. If you have had problems with vandalism in the past, consider improved lighting and/or security devices.

- Use good lighting in and around your business. This ensures that potential vandals are more visible and increases their chances of getting caught.



- Install lighting out of the reach of vandals. Mounting fixtures up high reduces the likelihood of damage.
- Use unbreakable fixtures or glass when possible. This reduces a person's opportunities to vandalize.
- Lock any gates, garages and external doors around your business to prevent unauthorized access. Also lock up any equipment or tools that may be easy targets for vandals.
- Clean up any signs of vandalism as soon as they appear. This may involve repairing broken or damaged signs or equipment.
- If you see someone committing an act of vandalism, report it to the police.