

# Reducing Graffiti in our Community



*You Can Help: Record, Report & Remove Graffiti Vandalism*

## Graffiti

The Saskatoon Property Maintenance and Nuisance Abatement Bylaw defines "GRAFFITI" as any drawing, inscription, writing or other mark that disfigures or defaces any building, accessory building, fence or other structure, however made, or otherwise affixed.

## Graffiti Vandalism Impact

Graffiti is a serious crime that impacts all members of the community. The victims of graffiti include:

- Property owners who incur tremendous expense in removing graffiti;
- Business owners who incur a loss of customers from the negative image that graffiti generates;
- Property and business owners who may incur devalued property;
- Communities who incur negative messaging of a community in decline;
- Taxpayers whose dollars are spent removing graffiti on public buildings, monuments and park structures.

## Graffiti Management Project

### The Graffiti Bylaw

The Saskatoon Property Maintenance and Nuisance Abatement Bylaw requires that no person shall permit graffiti on any building, accessory building, fence or on any structure on property owned by that person. All exterior surfaces shall be free of graffiti.

### How the Graffiti Bylaw Works

Once graffiti has been discovered, Fire and Protective Services will first provide the property owner with a brochure explaining why removing graffiti is important, offer some graffiti removal incentives and give a notice asking them to clean up the graffiti within seven days.

Failure to do so could result in an Order to Clean-up the Graffiti. The City would have the right to have Youth Works paint over the graffiti without the consent of the owner. The cost of the paint job would not be added to the taxes. The property owner would not be prosecuted.

## Reducing Graffiti Vandalism

You can help reduce graffiti in your community. If you are a victim of graffiti vandalism:

**Record it:** Take a picture of the graffiti vandalism as soon as it is identified.

**Report it:** Report all incidents of damage to your property by calling **Saskatoon Police Service at 975-8300**.

**Remove it:** Remove graffiti from your property as quickly as possible. The faster and more frequently graffiti is cleaned up, the less it appears. If you remove graffiti within...

24 hours - there is a 10% chance it will reappear.

2 weeks - there is a 100% chance it will reappear.

## Clean Up Incentives

**Recycled Paint** - Free recycled paint can be picked up at any SARCAN location in Saskatoon. Members of the public who wish to donate left over paint are encouraged to drop paint off at any SARCAN location.

**Purchase Discounted Paint** - You can purchase discounted paint and other graffiti removal products at the following paint companies: Eastside Paint and Wallpaper (2 locations); General Paint Corp (2 locations); Days Paints Ltd; Cloverdale Paint Inc; and Wolfe Home Furnishings.

**Saskatoon Fire & Protective Services in partnership with Youth Works** - This program offers the property owner vandalized by graffiti a free paint job to cover up the graffiti with a few selected standard colour paints.

**Please Note:** The Youth Works Program will NOT colour match with existing paint and will only cover the area vandalized by graffiti.

**Call a Commercial Graffiti Remover** - Hire a professional to wipe out graffiti from your property.

## Painting Over Graffiti

If a large portion of a property has been vandalized, it may be cheaper to simply repaint. It will also give you the opportunity to possibly change paints to a glossy enamel which will resist future graffiti attacks better than a flat finish. For added protection, having an extra gallon of the same type of paint will help ensure a quick and painless perfect match if graffiti returns.

Before painting, try to clean the surface of any dirt or grease (dull surface with graffiti remover, primer or sanding). Certain marker pens and permanent markers have the ability to absorb paint pigments. That's what makes them permanent so use a special paint called a stain blocker. Also, if the base color is light and the graffiti a dark color, use a stain blocker first. This special type of paint prevents the darker paint from seeping through the fresh paint.

### Oil or Latex Paint?

Oil base paint is tougher than latex. Latex is less expensive and easier to clean up. Though not recommended, oil base can be applied at below freezing temperatures if needed. Oil base takes longer to dry, but can be used if light rain threatens.

### Sealers and Foam Brushes

Once the new paint is on, you might consider using a "sealer" or "protectant." These types of products seal the small surface pores and prevent graffiti's ability to adhere.

Once sealed, new graffiti is less work to remove. Some protectant systems sacrifice a small amount of the sealer and need to be reapplied after the graffiti is removed. As a good insurance policy, buy some foam-type brushes. If graffiti reappears, use the foam brushes so that the new paint will blend into the old with perfect results. After, just toss the brushes away since they are inexpensive.

## Tips for Graffiti Removal

**Brick, Cement, Concrete** - Use extra strength paint remover. Apply with a wire brush to work into holes and pores of stone. Allow time to activate and rinse with a forceful stream of water from a hose. Use of a pressure washer or soda-blaster may be needed. If the surface is uniformly flat, a light grit (60) sand paper can remove paint, but will also scratch the surface. Consider using a sealer after removal to close pores and make future removal easier.

**Stucco** - Due to the multi-faceted surface of stucco, it is impossible to sand off. Use paint remover and follow up with a high pressure water hose or better yet a pressure washer. Use stucco paint and go over the graffiti carefully. Consider using a sealer as a finish coat.

**Aluminum/Vinyl Siding** - Aluminum siding is usually coated or painted. Vinyl siding is made of plastic which can be marred by lacquer thinner-type cleaners. Solvents may work too aggressively and remove the coating as well. Experiment in a small inconspicuous area first and then tackle the more visible areas. Use paint remover sparingly and carefully. Use a clean rag and keep turning to a clean part of the rag before each wipe. The longer the solvent stays on the surface, the deeper it penetrates. In most cases, you will probably have to repaint.

**Glass or Plexiglass** - Any razor blade can scrape away cured paint on regular glass. For other marks any solvent can be used. Use the clean rag technique and hold the rag over the graffiti for a moment to let the solvent work. On plexiglass be careful of the lacquer thinner type solvents as they can attack the surface causing it to fog and smear. Make sure your product is compatible with the type of surface you are cleaning. Rinse thoroughly with water.

**Wood** - Try working up the solvent list if the marks are new. Most thinners will remove magic markers and acetone will remove day old spray paint. You must use a clean rag and keep using a fresh part on each wipe. On latex or oil-based paint, use a stain-blocking primer for exterior use. After the stain blocker coat has dried, you can proceed with regular paints, oil or latex. Most oil base paints are more durable to solvents and hence could make future clean up easier. Consider a sealer coat after final finish. Avoid using flat paints as they readily absorb pigments from markers and spray paint.

**Fiberglass** - Depending on the type of graffiti, work your way up the thinner list. Be aware that acetone-based solvents will soften plastics. Use full-strength paint remover and rinse carefully.

**Metal** - On any unpainted metal (iron or stainless steel) surface, any solvent can be used. Some polished aluminum surfaces will cloud or oxidize with aggressive cleaners like lacquer thinner. Use the clean rag technique. If you are unsuccessful, try paint remover.

**Etching** - Surfaces scratched or scored with sharp objects can only be filled with fillers or the material will have to be replaced. Some new types of glass have replaceable covers or film layers that are cheaper to replace than the etched glass. Automotive body fillers can fill deep gouges and then be repainted. The only other recourse may be to replace the glass. You might deny the vandal visibility by etching over the vandal's mark, thus turning a "P" into a "B" and so on. It's a psychological solution, demonstrating that this area will not tolerate the vandal's message.

***For more information about graffiti removal and/or graffiti removal products, please contact home and lumber stores or general contractors.***

*Source: City of Milwaukee, "How to Wipe out Graffiti"*