



## Perris Press Release

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### Perris Police Arrest Graffiti Taggers

Perris Police this week arrested 10 suspected graffiti taggers linked to vandalism totaling more than \$115,000.

The arrests culminated a six-week investigation by the Department's Special Enforcement Team that included surveillance, numerous interviews and extensive follow-up investigation to identify each tagger and arrest them.

Perris officials hailed the police actions.

"This is great news for the City of Perris and all Perris residents," said Mayor Daryl Busch. "I am very pleased with the efforts of our police department. We work very closely with law enforcement and I want to give them a big congratulations."

Busch said the City is committed to prosecuting taggers to the full extent of the law.

Tagging lowers property values, decreases the quality of life in Perris, discourages business and commercial growth and promotes other criminal activity.

"Maybe this will discourage future taggers," the Mayor said. "But it will not diminish our long-term efforts to stamp out graffiti. We are very pleased with the results of the police investigation but our vigilance will not diminish."

Police announced the arrests on Monday. They did not release the names of those arrested because they are juveniles.

The City of Perris has been employing a high-tech system to track and identify graffiti vandals.

In August 2008, the City contracted with "Graffiti Tracker" to provide up-to-date photographs, specific locations assigned through Global Positioning System technology and the estimated square foot of damage done by tagging throughout the city.

The City of Perris Public Works utilizes personnel and equipment specifically to photograph and remove graffiti in the city. There are significant costs associated with these functions.

In all incidents when a suspect is positively identified in a vandalism case, the City makes every effort to recover money from that individual and his or her family to pay for damages incurred.

The City of Perris provides a "Letter of Restitution," which is sent to the Riverside County District Attorney's Juvenile Division. The restitution related to these most recent cases will cost the suspect(s) families over \$115,500.

Perris Police Sgt. Robert Duckett said authorities have identified two common types of graffiti.

The first type is gang associated graffiti and is a method of communicating a gang's claim on a particular area. The second type of graffiti is associated with tagging crews, individuals who view their "tags" as individual expressions of artwork. Both types are illegal, and degrade the quality of life for our city. Graffiti has a negative effect on communities.

Along with lowering neighborhood appeal, decreasing property values and driving away prospective home buyers and businesses, it also attracts criminal activity. Worst of all, gang members and "taggers" use graffiti to promote themselves. Covering up this graffiti takes away this tool and improves the overall look of neighborhoods.

Perris City Councilwoman Joanne Evans called the arrests "just superb" and thanked the police department for its "excellent work."

"I hate tagging, I hate it with a passion," Evans said. "It's so destructive."

Perris City Councilman Al Landers said the arrests send a message that taggers are not safe to commit their crimes in Perris.

"I am tired of everybody having to pay for the actions of a few people," Landers said. "It is time to make those responsible pay—and we intend to do so."

Perris City Councilman Mark Yarbrough said every dollar spent for graffiti removal—and the City spends more than \$100,000 annually—is taken away from worthwhile programs like parks and recreation services, youth sports programs and Senior Center activities.

"It's a problem that afflicts every city," Yarbrough said. "We're not going to ease up in our deterrence. We expect those who tag to make things right."

City Councilwoman Rita Rogers says the arrests send a "strong message" that the City will make parents pay for the bad behavior of their children.

Perris Police Chief James McElvain said officers, teaming with the City Council and Public Works staff, have targeted areas hard hit by graffiti and have achieved considerable success in arresting suspected vandals.

"We've made a concerted effort to stay on top of the problem," McElvain said. "We ask our residents and businesses to assist."

Anyone with information regarding graffiti tagging incidents or possible suspects that are committing the vandalism is asked to contact the Riverside County Sheriff's department, Perris Station Special Enforcement Team, Deputies Ruben Martinez or Gabriel Gil at (951) 210-1000.

The City of Perris also takes part in the WE-TIP program, which allows residents to report graffiti while remaining anonymous. People reporting graffiti are connected to a live operator 24 hours a day, 365 days a year.

**Calls can be made to 1-800-78-CRIME and tipsters are eligible for a reward if their information leads to the arrest and conviction of a graffiti tagger.**



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