



Perris News

Contact: Joe Vargo, Perris Public Information Officer
Phone: 951-956-2120
jvargo@cityofperris.org

Perris Uses TV and Internet to Battle Graffiti

Perris is taking its battle against graffiti to television and the Internet.

The City's Information Technology Department has produced a 10-minute public service announcement detailing the scope of the graffiti problem in Perris, the amount of money taggers siphon from other services and steps the community is taking to combat the problem.

Those include using state-of-the-art technology to track graffiti and identify the vandals who produce it, dedicated police units to investigate graffiti and arrest taggers and aggressive prosecution of taggers who are caught.

The PSA currently is being shown three times a day on Channel 3 and is also on the city website.

Mayor Daryl Busch does not mince words on the PSA, calling graffiti vandals "jerks" who damage the quality of life in Perris and project negative images about the City.

"People see graffiti and they think we're not a nice town," he said. "That's not true. We're a very nice City and we want people to know it."

The Mayor notes in his appearance on the PSA that graffiti costs the City more than \$100,000 each year to remove, money that could otherwise go to creating or expanding parks and recreation programs and community events. In that sense, graffiti really steals from every Perris resident and business.

Perris Human Resources and Risk Manager Isabel Lugo says the City 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.

Public Works Manager Daryl Hartwill says the City's efforts have paid off.

Since the beginning of the year, Perris police have identified and prosecuted several taggers, including a couple of prolific vandals responsible for marking up hundreds of locations. Since removing graffiti from a three-foot by three-foot location can cost up to \$400, taggers and their parents can be responsible for hundreds of thousands of dollars in restitution. Although Perris officials don't expect full reimbursement, Hartwill said the City is committed to collecting what it can.

"Graffiti is reprehensible," he said.

Perris makes use of Graffiti Tracker, a system that works like this: Cameras equipped with motion detectors are installed on light posts or other locations at municipal parks and shopping centers where they possess a panoramic view of the ground below. When the detectors sense the presence of someone loitering near a lavatory or park wall, they give a verbal warning: You have been spotted. If you break the law, you're picture will be snapped and forwarded to authorities for prosecution.

The city employs further action for those who choose to scrawl on walls or commit other vandalism. Public works crews respond to the scene the next morning and take photos of the graffiti tags with city-owned digital cameras. The cameras come with global positioning technology so there is absolutely no doubt where the image was captured and where the graffiti took place. That information is analyzed by photo experts entered into a data base kept by law enforcement.

Perris Police seek taggers in City schools by working with School Resource Officers who often are familiar with individual tags. When enough evidence is gathered, the case is turned over to the District Attorney's Office for prosecution. Some taggers have been arrested placed in Juvenile Hall; others are cited and ordered to appear in court.

Perris Police Officer Jason Gore—the department's expert on graffiti—says the City, law officers, school official and the District Attorney want to send a clear message: Graffiti will not be tolerated in Perris. The new PSA spells out the consequences of tagging and what will happen if violators are apprehended.

"It's a quality of life issue," he said. "We are committed to doing all we can to improve the quality of life in Perris."

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