



Constant Battle with Graffiti

San José's crime rate is up and one of the most visible examples of it can be seen in the rise in graffiti or tagging. Even though San José can boast having one of the most innovative and successful anti-graffiti programs in the nation, the number of tags is on the rise once more. The City surveys the number of different tags city-wide during a week chosen at random to assess tagging activity in the City. The baseline for tagging began in 1999 with 71,541 tags. In 2006 there were only 129 tags noted but in 2007 there were 2,594 tags documented and as of the third week of January 2008, a city-wide survey identified over 13,900 tags. By comparing the results the Police department is able to identify trends in tagging. This dramatic increase from 2006 to 2008 is cause for concern.

While not all tagging is gang-related the number of gang tags has increased. Residents are encouraged to report incidents of tagging to the city's graffiti hotline at 408-277-2758. The San José Police will take pictures of the tag and determine if the tag is gang related. This allows the police department to make assignments for patrols according to the needs in a specific area. It is the anti-graffiti program's goal to have any gang or vulgar graffiti covered up within 24 hours of the first report. But the resources for city staff to attend to all the graffiti is limited and that is why the city offers graffiti removal kits free of charge to citizens willing to help make a dent in the eradication of graffiti tags.

The anti-graffiti kits include a paint can with solvent spray, protective eyeglasses, sponges and rags. According to the National Crime Prevention Council, a neighborhood that allows graffiti to remain sends a message to people that the area does not care about its appearance. Also according to the National Crime Prevention Council Web site, rapid removal of the tags is one of the most effective ways to prevent further tagging. To pick up your Anti-Graffiti Tool Kit or to volunteer to clean up graffiti, call (408) 277-3208 or email antigrffiti@sanjoseca.gov. To view a video report on the anti-graffiti program by NBC11 go to <http://www.nbc11.com/news/15403426/detail.html>

For more facts and information on graffiti as well as grant opportunities, tips for businesses dealing with graffiti, working with police departments, and how to organize group graffiti cleanups go to www.graffitihurts.org