



## AMHERST POLICE DEPARTMENT

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Vandalism is an increasing problem for most police agencies in Canada and one that ends up eating away at a lot of police resources. The Amherst Police Department received 289 reported vandalism complaints in 2012. This is an increase from the 232 reported vandalism complaints in 2011. The chance of becoming a victim to vandalism-type crimes has also increased since 1999. In 1999, stats showed victimization stats at 66 instances per every one thousand households. In 2009, Stats Canada cited an increase to 74 instances of vandalism per every one thousand households in Canada. These stats are further aggravated because vandalism is also known to be one of the largest unreported crimes in Canada.

In the Criminal Code, vandalism is a criminal act that falls under “mischief” further defined under Section 430. This section states that *everyone commits mischief (vandalism) who wilfully:*

- *Destroys or damages property*
- *Renders property dangerous, useless, inoperative or ineffective*

Many youths see vandalism as a victimless crime; however this is not the case. Vandalism and mischief complaints are acts of hostility directed towards the victims of these crimes. The aggressor is indirectly assaulting the victim by damaging his or her property. This in turn causes a tremendous amount of fear, anger and stress among residents in our community.

Graffiti is one act of vandalism that costs businesses and homeowners thousands of dollars. It also helps lower property values in high hit areas which hurts everyone. It is not “art” as some people like to see it as.

How can we protect ourselves as a community? Our Department recommends the following tips to help minimize the effects that graffiti has in our area. We recommend to:

- Remove any graffiti on your buildings immediately after it has occurred. Graffiti that is on a wall for prolong periods of time tend to send out a message that nobody cares about that particular neighbourhood. By removing graffiti quickly, it also removes the fame and recognition that taggers get when they put it there in the first place.

- Homes in disrepair appear to attract vandals and keeping a neat and tidy property can help lower your likelihood of being a victim.
- Make sure that you also remove objects that allow criminals to climb up and tag higher areas.
- Add thorny bushes near areas that are vulnerable to graffiti.
- Use sacrificial paint coatings, which allow any graffiti to be washed off easily with a pressure washer.

Graffiti isn't the only type of vandalism that Amherst residents experience. The Amherst Police Department routinely gets calls about slashed tires and vehicle damage. It is recommended that vehicles are always parked in well lit areas and if possible in the safety of a garage. Our Department also sees multiple instances of thefts or damage to solar lights and other lawn furnishings. Motion sensor lights that come on when people enter your driveway or yard may also deter some vandals. The public is advised to keep watch in their community. The public is urged to call police if they see vandalism in progress by calling 911 or calling our local number at 667-8600. Be mindful of strangers in the area, especially near abandoned homes, schools or businesses. Parents of children under the age of sixteen must understand that they could be liable for the actions of their children.

Our community must be united in our fight against mischief related complaints. **Vandalism can be compared to a pandemic, it must be swiftly dealt with or it risks affecting the whole community.**