



# OCEANSIDE POLICE DEPARTMENT NEWS RELEASE



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## **GRAFFITI STING NETS CITATIONS TO BUSINESS OWNERS**

In order to curb the growing problem of graffiti and tagging, the Oceanside Police Graffiti Task Force conducted a spray paint graffiti sting on July 22, 2009. The Task Force was divided into two teams which consisted of uniformed officers, plain clothed officers, and one juvenile decoy per team. A total of fifteen retail stores, hardware and auto parts stores were focused on. A juvenile decoy was sent into the store to purchase spray paint. If the spray paint display case was locked, as per California law, the decoy would attempt to have a clerk open the display. If the locker was open, the juvenile decoy would attempt to purchase the spray paint.

Graffiti artist and taggers are difficult to catch in the act. In most cases the police react to a call of vandalism. Police usually arrive on scene well after the culprit is long gone, only to document the hundreds and sometimes thousands of dollars worth of damage. The police department is trying to be proactive by educating retailers about the sales of spray paint to minors and stemming the sales of spray paint to juveniles.

The graffiti sting resulted in six citations for open paint displays and sales to a minor. The Graffiti Task Force will be conducting more of these stings in the future.

If citizens ask, "What can I do?" ALWAYS paint over graffiti immediately. Research done in California shows that areas painted over immediately are much less likely to be hit again.

NEVER confront or challenge someone who is tagging a wall or property. You never know if the suspect(s) are armed and to what lengths they will go to protect their identity and flee the area.

If possible, obtain as much information or description of the suspect(s), the type of vehicle and a license plate. Contact the police as soon as you can and report the crime.

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