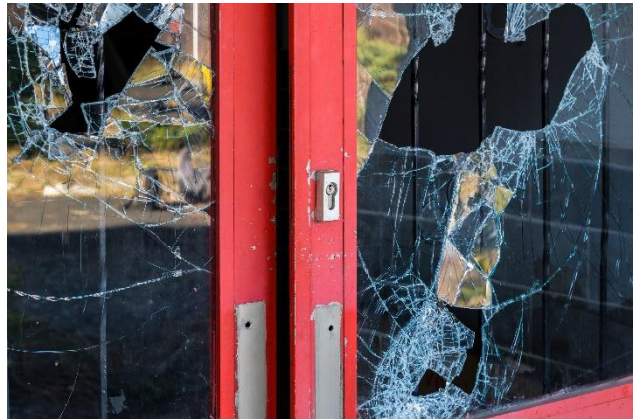


Toolbox Talks

Vandalism - Managing the Exposure

Vandalism is defined as “Intentional damage caused by someone else to your property, without your consent.” According to the US Department of Justice, “The total cost of vandalism in the United States is estimated to be between \$2 and \$10 billion annually but underreporting and the practice of including vandalism as an operating cost of business make this a conservative figure”. MMA Risk Management Services recognizes that Cities and Towns put significant effort into maintaining municipal buildings, equipment, and take considerable pride in keeping public areas as safe as possible. Acts of vandalism are expensive and disruptive to your community. Often, they can seem random, or unpredictable, but by identifying and addressing areas of vulnerability we can help reduce the likelihood of them occurring and help prevent them from reoccurring. Here are strategies that your organization can implement to help control vandalism.

- **Cameras** - Installation of surveillance cameras both interior and exterior. Identify the areas of vulnerability utilizing the MMA site assessment form and install cameras in those areas. Areas most common for camera placement are entrances and exits, hallways, stairways, playgrounds, and areas not easily seen from the road, etc. Camera footage should be recorded to a server (cloud based or local server based) and maintained for a minimum of 30 days. Camera systems should also be set up to alert someone in the event motion is seen during certain hours; an example could be a camera installed at a Public Works Garage sees motion of someone walking through the parking lot where equipment is stored overnight. The property is gated, and no one is supposed to be on the property in the middle of the night, but the camera identifies the motion and sends an alert to someone who can then notify the authorities before an act of vandalism occurs.
- **Intrusion Alarms** - Alarm systems should be installed at all locations that could be subject to acts of vandalism. Work with your alarm company to identify the type of alarm and sensors that best meets the needs of your site. Remember to include sensors like motion sensors in areas where no one should be to prevent acts of vandalism before they occur. An alarm system should be set up to notify a responsible party as well as Law Enforcement in the event a sensor is triggered.
- **Engage with Law Enforcement** - Contact your local law enforcement agency and determine how you can work directly with them to prevent acts of vandalism. Asking for officers to complete buildings checks during after hours, offering the site as a parking spot for officers to complete reports, and simply having a conversation with the law enforcement agency will have effective results. If an act of vandalism occurs, be sure to report it immediately! The sooner law enforcement agencies are notified of the crime, the better. Criminal investigations are much easier to conduct and solve when timely reporting occurs.
- **Lighting** - Install lighting in areas that are not well lit. Light is the vandals’ biggest enemy. Lighting is quite a simple, yet effective, deterrent against criminal activity. Keeping areas well-lit makes it difficult to commit acts of vandalism without being seen. You can hide in the dark, but hiding in the light is not as easy.



Toolbox Talks

- **Routine Inspections** - Complete routine inspections of both the interior and exterior of your site(s). Monthly site inspections should be part of your normal operations and making sure to include identifying areas that could be potential targets of vandalism is yet another way of preventing acts of vandalism before they occur.
- **Fencing** - High quality fencing should be installed around your facility/site in any areas you are looking for to deter unauthorized access. Be sure to monitor the condition of the fencing during your routine inspections and make repairs to damaged parts as soon as possible.
- **Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design CPTED** - Strategically plant shrubs and or bushes to make it more difficult for vandals to reach an area that you have deemed to be a potential target or weak spot. Crime prevention through environmental design (CPTED) has proven to be an effective means at reducing acts of vandalism. "CPTED's goal is to prevent crime by designing a physical environment that positively influences human behavior. The theory is based on four principles: natural access control, natural surveillance, territoriality, and maintenance." *
- **Have a Clean Up Plan** - Establish a rapid-response graffiti removal program to eliminate graffiti quickly, discouraging vandals from using the building as a canvas. Quickly repairing the damage will help to restore a sense of safety and security and it is an effective means of discouraging additional acts. *Clean up begins only after the police have been notified and they have responded to start their criminal investigation*
- **Keep the Site Secured** - Make sure your doors, windows, and gates are secured daily. This is the least expensive option for preventing vandalism. Vandals look for easy targets. Every extra step that you force them to take encourages them to go elsewhere. Locking windows, doors and gates should be part of a daily routine.
- **Signage** - Posting signs indicating the presence of surveillance and announcing your commitment to prosecute property crime can work to your favor as perhaps the would-be vandals, or burglars to move along.

Remember that no single strategy is foolproof, and a comprehensive approach that combines multiple tactics is often the most effective way to reduce vandalism at public buildings. Additionally, it is important to regularly assess the effectiveness of these strategies and adjust them as needed based on the specific needs and challenges of the community and the building in question. Many of the solutions above would be eligible for funding from our Risk Reduction Grant, which can be found here: <https://www.memun.org/Risk-Management/Grants-Scholarships/Risk-Reduction-Grant>

Sources:

* <https://www.ncpc.org/resources/home-neighborhood-safety/crime-prevention-through-environmental-design-training-program/>

* <https://www.ojp.gov/ncjrs/virtual-library/abstracts/vandalism-overview-problem-and-recommended-prevention-techniques#:~:text=Although%20the%20total%20cost%20of,make%20this%20a%20conservative%20figure.>

