

SC graffiti law targets property owners

Crime & Criminals - Graffiti
By ROBIN MUSITELLI

Sentinel staff writer

SANTA CRUZ — The hunter is armed, loaded with city complaint forms, ready to hunt down and eradicate graffiti.

By the end of the week, about two dozen property owners will have been targeted.

The city's graffiti ordinance took effect at the end of October, making it illegal for property owners to let graffiti remain on their property.

The ordinance also prohibits stores after July from keeping spray paint and large indelible markers on shelves where customers could get at them without staff's help. In cases where juvenile offenders are caught, the ordinance makes parents liable for fines.

Following passage of the ordinance, the city established a graffiti hot line for people to report the paint problems. In addition, complaint forms were printed and a part-time employee hired to repaint the offending artwork.

Now 24 problem properties have been identified. The city will send owners notices on Friday, said City Clerk Emma Solden.

The property owners can either clean up the graffiti themselves within a week or have the city

graffiti-buster paint over it for them, said Solden. The city won't charge for the initial repainting, Solden said, but might not have the right color paint.

"The city will do it, but we're not promising we're going to match up the paint exactly," said Solden.

Under some circumstances, property owners may have to foot the bill.

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"If the property owner is uncooperative, or say we've gone out there seven times and they don't care or haven't taken any steps to take care of it," the city's costs of cleaning the graffiti up could be added to the property tax bill, said Solden.

To report graffiti within city limits, people should call the hot line at 429-3787.