



Technical Information

Graffiti removal Procedures.

Graffiti has been a problem in Hawaii for many years. Laws restricting sale of spray paint to minors has had little effect, and since our laws do not have sufficient "tooth", we can expect that new graffiti will continue to appear. The faster that it is removed, the less likely it is to reappear at the same spot. Fortunately, the majority of graffiti appears on smooth concrete walls, pillars and highway bridges that can be "painted over". This is usually the quickest, cheapest and least technical answer when practical. However it provides a fresh "Canvas" for the vandals. Moss rock walls, Street signs, bare architectural concrete such as split face block are likely to be important visual elements that need to be cleaned rather than painted over.

Before removing graffiti it is a good idea to photograph it for legal and insurance purposes, or in case of the possibility of criminal prosecution. Much of the graffiti represents a "signature" of the artist/vandal, and may be known to the authorities.

The removal process should start with answering the following questions.

1. Identify the surface. Is it bare concrete? Previously painted? If so, can the paint be matched for repainting?
2. Attempt to identify the paint or media. Is it spray paint? Permanent marker? Water based? Solvent based?
3. Quality of application; Is it dry spray? Wet, penetrating as from a spray can held close to the surface? Is it deep into cracks or porous surfaces?
4. Are any safety precautions required for person doing the removal?
5. Do you have authority to do the removal?

Once the conditions are established, the appropriate removal procedure should be determined.

If the surface is previously painted, or a hard, smooth surface, **Tagaway®** should be tried first. I always like to do a very small test first to be sure the chemical will not react with the surface. Spray on, wipe off. Possibly more than one pass will be required. If surface is slightly rough, a nylon or fiber brush may help. Water based paints are the easiest to remove and usually leave no stain. Permanent marker ink is easily removed, but may leave a "shadow" stain. Household bleach will sometimes remove the stain.

Rough porous rock and raw CMU or concrete presents special challenges. If the spray was reasonably dry it can be easily removed, possibly with a pressure washer of 4000 PSI or higher. If water pressure alone does not remove the paint, the next step would be to apply **Taginator®** and pressure wash again.

Other methods are available including abrasive blasting using a variety of abrasives from garnet to bicarbonate of soda. This method requires environmental considerations including containment of blast media and dust and noise abatement, clean-up of spent media and protection of workers and bystanders.

If you have further questions of to purchase or rent products or equipment, please call MSI for assistance and our technicians will gladly assist you.