

# *Catholic Mutual. . ."CARES"*

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## SCHOOL SAFETY

### SCHOOL VANDALISM

#### Obtaining Community Aid

1. School authorities should hold discussions with students and parents to promote better relations. During these discussions, it should be pointed out to parents, as well as students, that vandalism impairs the quality of education while raising costs, since every dollar spent because of vandalism is a dollar that cannot be spent to improve education.
2. Neighborhood communities as well as groups from the Parent Teacher Association should be formed to address the vandalism issue.
3. Support should be enlisted from residents who live in the immediate vicinity of the various schools. These residents should be asked to report any suspicious activities that they may see.
4. A telephone number should be provided for day and night use so that anyone, at any time, can report any acts of vandalism.
5. Parents, schools, and appropriate authorities should do everything possible to identify incipient vandals before their malicious acts get out of hand. Therefore, in these early stages, the individuals involved in vandalism may be dealt with appropriately.

#### Student Assistance

1. Students can be used effectively in controlling vandalism losses. Responsibility should be placed in the hands of those who have demonstrated leadership ability - class officers, athletes, committee members, etc. Civic groups should work with these individuals as well as school officials and classroom teachers in coordinating the program. However, the students should do the bulk of the work which should include educating the student body at large about their own schools, soliciting assistance of the citizens residing near the schools, and posting notices in the school buildings.
2. Students should also be asked to analyze the problem and propose to school authorities a list of various corrective steps.

3. Teenage students should be asked to work with the appropriate authorities on patrol work.
4. Efforts should be made to interest students in beautification and clean-up work around the school.

#### Keeping Buildings Occupied

1. Since occupied buildings, obviously, are not as susceptible to vandalism as empty ones, school buildings should be occupied as often and as long as possible. If such activities are not already being held, consider using the school at night for adult education courses and/or arts and craft courses.
2. Encourage the use of school buildings by people in the community for various events. This not only gives the parents a greater interest in the school, but helps build community support toward discouraging vandalism.
3. Schedule custodial crews to do their cleaning at night.
4. If feasible and agreeable, consider having the custodian live on the premises.

#### Using Police or Security

1. Police or security officers should be asked to make frequent checks on the schools where the greatest acts of vandalism have occurred.
2. Police or security officers should be utilized to the fullest on a daily basis. Their schedules and the number of patrols made nightly should vary.

#### Use of Publicity

1. Request the members of the local media to devote some space and time to help educate citizens, as well as students on the importance of protecting their schools. Most local newspapers, radio stations, or television stations are normally happy to cooperate in doing this as a public service since it builds up goodwill. Wide spread and free publicity is of great value in a program of vandalism prevention. Any publicity of any kind, or letter writing to parents, directed toward the education of the public at large AGAINST vandalism should stress the POSITIVE action that can be taken to correct the situation.
2. Use signs that can easily be read from some distance around vulnerable exterior portions of the building, advertising the fact that the premises are patrolled.

### Reducing Glass Breakage

1. Windows already broken are psychological invitations to break additional panes of glass. Windows should be replaced immediately, preferably with plastic or unbreakable glass.
2. Outside doors should be equipped with either metal or a break-resistant substitute for regular window glass.
3. Install fencing around the buildings, or across entries which can be locked at school closing. This fencing should be of the strongest material obtainable since experience has shown that some vandals have cut through some fencing and, in some cases, have actually carted it away.
4. The grounds around the school buildings should be blacktopped or treated with a surface that eliminates missile-type debris. However, in paving, repaving, or landscaping, bricks or other decorative substances around trees or other areas, which can be dug, pried, or lifted out of the ground should be avoided. Otherwise, these items make excellent ammunition for rock throwers.
5. Make generous use of exterior flood lighting, either mounted on the school buildings or on street poles with the light focused on the school. Also, some of the more vulnerable rooms and corridors within the school should be kept well lighted.

### Protective Devices

1. There are various types of electronic and other security systems, although all serve the purpose of acting as a reporting device for the possible apprehension of vandals. However, before installation of any system, you should consult with the law enforcement agency in your area as to the adequacy and effectiveness of the various alarm systems that you may be considering. When any type of alarm system is employed, notices should be posted both outside and inside the school that the building is protected by alarm devices.
2. Usually it is not economically feasible to try to protect an entire school; protective devices for corridors, stairwells, ground floor classrooms, administrative offices, or areas where valuable property may be located generally afford as much security as efforts to guard the entire facility.

### Miscellaneous Recommendations

1. Generous exterior flood lighting should help discourage would-be vandals from approaching the school building.
2. In addition to broken window panes, any damage or defacement to the school building, its contents or grounds, should be removed, repaired, or replaced as soon as possible. The entire student body should be notified that the damage has occurred, told of the approximate repair costs, and informed that the action and damage has been brought to the attention of school authorities and appropriate law enforcement agencies.
3. All doors, locks, and other items of this nature, should be made tamper-proof as much as possible.
4. Always lock unused portions of the school building when premises are being used for community or recreational activities.
5. Assign specific doors and windows to custodians for them to check each night to assure that they are locked.
6. For possible fire purposes, the installation of smoke detection and heat sensing devices, preferably tied into the local fire department, is strongly recommended. The detection system can also be arranged to close automatic fire doors to prevent the spread of fire and smoke.
7. All shrubbery or other “cover” near the school facility should be removed.
8. All trash receptacles, where possible, should be removed after lunch periods.
9. Eliminate the use of and seal off any through-wall book returns whether exterior or interior.
10. If additions to buildings are being planned, or a new school facility is in the design stages, be sure to familiarize architects with the problems of vandalism, including unlawful entries, glass breakage, etc. This may go a long way in “building out” vandalism costs.
11. During renovations or new construction, contractors and maintenance personnel should be warned and advised of the necessity for protection of materials. Storage of paint, whether opened or unopened containers, should be made as inaccessible as possible. Paint is a favorite weapon of vandals!

There is no quick and easy solution to the problem of vandalism. What is truly needed is a carefully organized and concerted drive — a broad assault on this costly form of mischief and this tremendous economic waste.