



NEWS

From County Supervisor Paul Biane

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Sheriff's Station Gets New Tool to Target Graffiti Vandals

SAN BERNARDINO – Sheriff's deputies are getting a new tool to help them track, identify, and arrest graffiti vandals in unincorporated Fontana, according to a contract approved by the Board of Supervisors on Tuesday.

The contract authorizes the West Foothill Sheriff's Station to purchase a subscription to Graffiti Tracker, a web-based graffiti intelligence service, and digital cameras that attach GPS coordinates to photos. Photos of graffiti are downloaded onto the Graffiti Tracker website along with the GPS information. Graffiti experts analyze the photos to decipher the moniker or gang name used and then download the information to Graffiti Tracker's Website.

Law enforcement can use the information to track and identify graffiti vandals. In addition, prosecutors can use the information to elevate vandalism charges from misdemeanors to felonies by linking one vandal to multiple incidents of graffiti. Vandalism is considered a felony when the damage is \$400 or more. The information can help increase the amount of restitution vandals are ordered to pay in court.

"This system gives our deputies the ability to aggressively pursue these criminals so they can be prosecuted and ordered to pay restitution for their crimes," said Second District Supervisor Paul Biane, who represents unincorporated Fontana. "Graffiti costs taxpayers millions of dollars every year, and I think it is about time graffiti vandals start picking up that tab."

Graffiti Tracker is also used by other local cities, including the cities of Rancho Cucamonga, Fontana, Chino, and Montclair. Law enforcement officers from these cities and others that subscribe to the service will be able to view information collected by deputies in unincorporated Fontana. The deputies will also have access to graffiti information collected by other Graffiti Tracker users.

A one-year subscription to Graffiti Tracker and digital cameras will cost \$12,000. The funding comes from a memorandum of understanding (MOU) between the County and the City of Fontana that was adopted in 2007. The MOU call for the County to set aside 37% of the sales tax collected in unincorporated Fontana to use for projects that will benefit the community. In return, the City of Fontana agreed to make the City's sewer service available in the unincorporated Fontana area.

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