



News Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

Aug. 24, 2007

Contact:

Austin Carter
(951) 826-5231

Riverside targets 'taggers'

RIVERSIDE, Calif. – A tagger is now more likely to see jail time or fines because of a new city program approved last week.

The City of Riverside is offering \$500 reward for information leading to the arrest of graffiti criminals, known as "taggers."

"We know there are witnesses out there who see taggers every day," said Councilman Steve Adams, a member of the city's public safety committee. "They may not have come forward before, but this reward means a lot more will. When you pick up a spray can, expect to do time and pay a heavy fine."

People who see taggers or those with graffiti tools can anonymously call the emergency dispatch, 787-7911 (for crimes in progress), or the Riverside Call Center, 826-5311, to report past incidents.

The guidelines are:

- The arrest must be for graffiti vandalism or possession of vandalism tools;
- One reward per incident;
- If more than one person calls in a report, the first caller receives the reward;
- The crime must have occurred in the City of Riverside, and the reward applies equally for public or private property;
- The information must be of a crime in progress, just occurred or about to occur;
- The reward must be repaid if the recipient is caught later for tagging; and
- The recipient need not be a city resident; and
- City employees or volunteers cannot collect.

"The city wants to increase its ability to arrest graffiti criminals and better reward witnesses who report crime," said Siobhan Foster, director of public works. "It's part of our zero tolerance policy."

Riverside Police have arrested more than 385 taggers since 2005. Calls reporting this crime have jumped 850 percent from just four years ago. Police officials have announced that their

first telephone call seeking a reward came on Wednesday. Police must first investigate the allegation and an arrest must be made before the reward can be collected.

Riverside will spend \$1.04 million in 2007 removing graffiti. The city standard is to remove graffiti within 24 hours.

The city has collected thousands of dollars in reimbursement this year from parents of minors who have been caught tagging.

"I'm delighted to report that Riverside has a graffiti crime reward," said Mayor Ronald O. Loveridge. "It's worked in other cities across the country to reduce graffiti. It is time for Riverside, also."

###