



PRESSURE WASHING TIPS FOR GRAFFITI REMOVAL

by Paul Horsley, Publisher

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Graffiti is a stubborn eyesore. Because paint can penetrate deeply into porous wood and concrete surfaces, graffiti cannot typically be removed with conventional cleaning approaches. No amount of elbow grease will allow you to remove graffiti with just soap and water.

Sometimes it is possible to quickly repaint the surface that has fallen prey to tagging; some cities even employ paint crews to quickly paint over fresh graffiti. However, as many business owners appreciate, sometimes it's just not possible to paint over a tag. Not all surfaces may be repainted; if the street-facing side of your business features a brick exterior, for instance, painting over graffiti probably isn't an option.

In such circumstances, pressure washing can be a godsend. Pressure washers can emit water at 300 times the power of a standard garden hose. Oftentimes, this is enough to loosen and lift paint. If traditional pressure washing isn't effective, graffiti removal service providers may be able to remove the graffiti by pressure washing with a specially-formulated, environmentally-friendly cleaning agent. Many pressure washing cleaning formulas contain nano-level technology to break apart paint at the microscopic level. For this reason, it's smart to hire a pressure washing company when

attempting to remove especially intractable graffiti.

Below, we've gathered tips on how to use pressure washing to remove graffiti, especially from commercial buildings:

Choose a high pressure setting. Pressure washers offer adjustable pressure settings; for graffiti removal, you will probably need to adjust your washer to a high pressure setting. Don't overdo it, though – too much pressure could wear away the surface you are trying to clean. Some recommend pressure washing at a setting of 3,000 PSI when removing graffiti; this may vary according to the paint and the surface to be cleaned.

Don't work in very cold or very hot temperatures. Many paint removers do not work well when the ambient temperature is extremely high or low.

Set your pressure washer to a high water flow setting. The rate of water flow is another setting that may be adjusted on pressure washers. For removing graffiti, it's best to have a high rate of flow, around three to five gallons per minute. Again, don't go too far with this; slowly ratchet up the rate of flow until the graffiti begins to lift. Avoid jumping directly to a very high pressure or water flow setting; instead, slowly increase pressure to the absolute minimum required to remove the tag.

Consider adding heat and/or steam.

Heat and steam have long been recognized as powerful ways to strip paint from interiors. Similarly, graffiti paint may more easily be removed with heat and/or steam. Both heat and steam soften paint film, making it easier to lift the paint. Modern pressure washing machines can deliver heated water at temperatures as high 330 degrees Fahrenheit, which helps break down and remove grease and other substances. Again, don't go directly to the highest temperature available on your machine; experiment until you find the lowest possible heat or steam setting that will remove the tag.

Choose the right cleaning agent. As conservators can tell you, each exterior surface has its own cleaning requirements. Masonry will require different cleaning solutions than wood, and different types of masonry require different types of cleaners. Research your building's exterior to figure out which type of cleaner to use. Then follow the manufacturer's instructions to avoid causing permanent damage.

As an example, alkaline paint removers

require a pre-wetted surface to work. In contrast, solvent-based cleaning products are incompatible with water. (If you're at all concerned about the possibility of damaging your building's exterior, it may be best to simply hire a pressure washing company for graffiti removal service.)

Start at the bottom and work your way up. As you apply pressure, heat, steam and cleaning agents with your pressure washing machine, work upwards. That way, you'll avoid staining lower surfaces.

Generally, it is best to hire a graffiti removal service when attempting to have tags removed from the exterior of your home or business. Graffiti removal service professionals understand how advanced pressure washing technology, such as heat, steam and specially formulated soap, can work together to quickly lift graffiti from nearly any exterior surface. Rather than struggling to patch together a haphazard education on pressure washing, consider hiring a pressure washing company that offers a specialized graffiti removal service. This approach will save you money, time and irritation down the road.

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