

GENERAL ORDER



Title		
Illegal Signs and Defaced Property		
Topic	Series	Number
SPT	307	05
Effective Date		
May 6, 2025		
Rescinds:		
SO-01-26 (Illegal Posters on Public Space), Effective Date October 10, 2001		

DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

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I. PURPOSE

The presence of illegal signs and defaced property contribute to a sense of disorder which promotes criminal activity and invites fear in the community. The policy of the Metropolitan Police Department (MPD) is to address violations of the DC Official Code and District of Columbia Municipal Regulations related to the unlawful presence of signs and defaced property. The purpose of this general order is to provide procedures for addressing these violations.

II. PROCEDURES

A. General

- [District of Columbia Municipal Regulations \(DCMR\) Title 24 \(Public Space and Safety\) Chapter 24-1 \(Occupation and Use of Public Space\)](#) limits the use of signs on public space in Section 24-108 (Signs, Posters, and Placards). Signs posted in violation of 24 DCMR § 108 can be removed.
- Affixing signs to private property without the permission of the owner, in a manner that defaces the property, may be a violation of [DC Official Code § 22-303 \(Malicious burning, destruction or injury to another's property\)](#). Violations of this section are probable cause misdemeanor offenses.
- Graffiti and similar forms of defaced property are covered under [DC Official Code § 22-3312.01 \(Defacing public or private property\)](#). Additionally, [DC Official Code § 22-3112.04\(a\) \(Penalties\)](#) prohibits the possession of graffiti material with the intent to place graffiti on property without the consent of the owner. Violations of these sections are probable cause misdemeanor offenses.

B. Signs on Public Space

Use of signs on public space is limited by 24 DCMR § 108 to the following requirements:

Requirements for Signs on Public Space	
1.	Signs may be affixed to public lampposts but they cannot be placed on any tree in public space except to serve a government function (e.g., Emergency No Parking or Reserved Parking signs);
2.	Signs cannot be lewd, indecent, or vulgar, or represent the commission of or the attempt to commit any crime;
3.	Signs cannot relate to the sale of goods or services;
4.	Signs must contain the date that they were initially affixed to a lamppost;
5.	Signs may remain up for no more than 180 days unless the sign is related to a specific event in which case, they shall be removed no later than 30 days following the related event;
6.	Signs must be securely affixed to avoid being torn or disengaged by normal weather conditions;
7.	Signs cannot be affixed using adhesives that would prevent their complete removal from the fixture or that do damage to the fixture;
8.	No more than three versions or copies of each sign may be affixed on one side of a street within one block;
9.	Within 24 hours of posting a sign, two copies of the sign must be filed with the Public Space Permit Office with the name, address, and telephone number of the originator of the sign and the date of the event (when applicable). This does not apply to political campaign posters of registered candidates.
10.	Political campaign signs of registered candidates do not need to be filed with the Public Space Permit Office but they must be removed no later than 30 days following the general election.

C. Enforcement

- Members who observe signs posted on public space in violation of 24 DCMR § 108 shall contact the Department of Public Works (DPW). Members may issue a PD Form 61-D (Violation Citation) to eligible arrestees for violations of the DCMR and DC Official Code.
- In the event that members observe individuals defacing public or private property, members shall take appropriate police action including, but not limited to, photographing the damage with their body worn camera (BWC) in accordance with [GO-SPT-304.08 \(Crime Scene Response and Evidence Collection\)](#).
- Any enforcement of an illegal sign and/or defaced property violation shall be documented in a records management system (RMS) report.

III. DEFINITIONS

When used in this directive, the following terms shall have the meanings designated.

	Term	Definition
1.	Event	Occurrence, happening, activity or series of activities, specific to an identifiable time and place, if referenced on the sign or reasonably determined from all circumstances by the inspector.

2.	Graffiti	Inscription, writing, drawing, marking, or design that is painted, sprayed, etched, scratched, or otherwise placed on structures, buildings, dwellings, statues, monuments, fences, vehicles, or other similar materials that are on public or private property without the consent of the owner, manager, or agent in charge of the property, and the graffiti is visible from a public right-of-way.
3.	Graffiti material	Aerosol can, bottle, spray device, or other mechanism designed to dispense paint or a similar substance under pressure, indelible marker, paint stick, adhesive label, and engraving device capable of leaving a visible mark on a natural or man-made surface.
4.	Public lamppost	Post erected for the purpose of supporting electric wires.
5.	Public or private property	Building, bridge, fence or other structure, any street, alley, sidewalk, or other vehicular or pedestrian right-of-way, any article of street furniture, lamppost, bus shelter, newspaper box, or trash receptacle, any tree, rock, or other natural fixture, any utility or public service equipment, or any other personal property located outdoors, whether publicly or privately owned
6.	Sign	Name, identification, description, display, or illustration which is affixed to, or represented directly or indirectly upon a building, structure, or piece of land and which directs attention to an object, product, place, activity, person, institution, organization, or business (e.g., campaign poster, event sign).



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