

County Historical Commissions (CHC) can lead the way in preventing cemetery vandalism. Be proactive! Anticipate days when trouble is likely to occur, such as Halloween or other evenings when community celebrations take place. Once you have identified these dates or events, take time to prepare using the following suggestions.¹

Partner with people in the community. Create a Cemetery Watch group for cemetery protection that includes CHC appointees, local law enforcement, neighbors of the cemetery, and individuals who are interested in protecting the community's historic cemeteries. Never guard a cemetery alone, of course, and always notify local authorities that you will be posted at the cemetery.

Develop a cemetery protection plan. The plan should include contact names and phone numbers for the Cemetery Watch group, area law enforcement contacts, instructions on what to do when vandalism or suspicious activity occurs, and any other information that the Cemetery Watch group members need to know.

Maintain the cemetery. You can discourage unwanted visitors simply by picking up trash, clearing fallen branches, and trimming grass and trees. Good maintenance can prevent vandalism because it signals that someone is actively caring for the cemetery.

Add cemetery signage. Installing signage at the entrance of a cemetery is another way to indicate that people care for the site and are actively monitoring its condition. Provide contact information for visitors to report problems. Include hours of operation to discourage after-hours trespassing.

Take photographs. Documenting existing conditions helps determine the scope of damage if a cemetery is vandalized or otherwise damaged. At the very least, carefully record items that may be desirable to thieves so they can be identified if recovered.

Educate the public. Create responsible stewards of cemeteries by educating the public on the significance of historic cemeteries. Several CHCs currently lead cemetery tours and create activities that teach young people about local history and cemetery maintenance.

Find more info on historic cemetery preservation at www.thc.texas.gov/cemetery

¹ These suggestions were compiled using web content from the [Evergreen Cemetery Benevolent Society](#) and the [Oregon Parks and Recreation Department](#).