

TOBACCO PRODUCT WASTE AND OUR ENVIRONMENT: THE FACTS

Although 86 percent of smokers consider cigarette butts litter, three-quarters of them reported disposing of them on the ground or out a car window at some point.¹ Cigarette butts are litter, just like carelessly discarded fast food containers, soda cans, plastic bottles and bags.

Tobacco waste is costly to clean up, putting an extra financial burden on taxpayers, cities, and businesses. For example, in 2007, it was determined that in San Francisco, CA, the city spent more than \$7 million to clean up discarded cigarettes and butts.²

During the 2012 International Coastal Cleanup, more than 10,000 cigarette butts were collected in a single day from 54 miles of coastal beaches and land around inland waterways.^{3,4} The amount of cigarette butt litter collected during the 2013 International Coastal Cleanup increased with more than 12,000 cigarette butts collected within Maryland alone; nationwide, a total of 1,086,788 cigarette butts were collected during the cleanup.⁵ Cigarette butts mar the beauty of our natural landscapes as much as discarded soda cans and other litter.

Tobacco litter – including cigarette butts, cigar tips, cartons, foil and cellophane/plastic packaging – harm wildlife. Both marine and terrestrial animals, including pets, frequently mistake tobacco litter for food and ingest it. The chemicals released into aquatic environments from cigarette butts are lethal to plankton-like animals, which serve a critical function in our aquatic ecosystems. Because Maryland is home to such wildlife sanctuaries as the Chesapeake Wildlife Sanctuary, the Blackwater Wildlife Refuge, and the Patuxent Research Refuge, the continual pollution of our State's outdoor areas with tobacco litter threatens the key wildlife that inhabit these environments, such as birds, crabs, rockfish, and oysters.⁶

Tobacco litter can even put our children at risk for nicotine poisoning. In 2011, poison control centers in the U.S. received more than 7,000 calls concerning nicotine-containing product exposures in children younger than 6.⁷ Young children might ingest cigarette butts on the ground, easily mistaking the waste for candy or food.

Carelessly discarded tobacco products can cause fires. In 2012, 8 percent of wildfires in Maryland were ignited by lit tobacco products, resulting in 62 acres being burned.⁸

Many municipalities, cities, and counties nationwide prohibit smoking on beaches⁹ and in parks.¹⁰ In Maryland, cities such as Hagerstown and Bowie, as well as counties such as Caroline, Harford, and Howard Counties prohibit smoking in parks. Beginning in May 2015, Ocean City will join its neighboring Delaware beaches – Dewey, Fenwick Island, and Smyrna – in enforcing smoking bans on its beaches.¹¹

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Nearly 1 million pounds of toxic chemicals were released into the environment by tobacco product manufacturing in 2011. The top five chemicals released were ammonia, nicotine, hydrochloric acid, nitrate compounds and chlorine.¹²

The best solutions to the tobacco waste problem are for nonsmokers to not start to smoke and for smokers to quit. Free quitting help is available at SmokingStopsHere.com or 1-800-QUIT-NOW.

¹ Rath JM, Rubenstein RA, Curry LE, Shank SE, Cartwright JC. (2012). Cigarette Litter: Smokers' Attitudes and Behaviors. International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health.9(6):2189–2203. Available at: www.mdpi.com/1660-4601/9/6/2189/.

²Novotny T. (2013). Tobacco Product Waste Reduction Toolkit. California Department of Public Health, California Tobacco Control Program. Sacramento. www.cigwaste.org/tobacco-waste-reduction-toolkit/

³Ocean Conservancy. (2012). International Coastal Cleanup. <http://www.oceanconservancy.org/our-work/international-coastal-cleanup/2012-ocean-trash-index.html>

⁴Trash-Free Maryland Alliance. Blog Post. Retrieved February 10, 2014. Available at: www.TrashFreeMaryland.org

⁵ Ocean Conservancy (2014). Turning the tide on trash: 2014 Report on the International Coastal Cleanup. Retrieved September 2, 2014. Available at: http://issuu.com/jyearly/docs/tfs_data_report_final/23?e=10446736/7930585

⁶ Whitepaper: Smokefree Parks and Recreation Areas. Available at: www.law.umaryland.edu/programs/tobacco/documents/Smokefree_Parks_White_Paper.pdf

⁷ Maryland Poison Center. (2013). Poison Prevention Pass. (6)5. Available at: http://www.mdpoison.com/media/SOP/md-poisoncom/publications/pppress/2013/PPPress_E-CigarettesNicotine_SeptOct-2013.pdf

⁸ Maryland Department of Natural Resources Maryland Forest Service Wildland Fire Management 2012 Annual Wildfire Report. www.dnr.maryland.gov/forests/fire/pdfs/2012WildfireSummaryRpt.pdf

⁹ Americans for Nonsmokers' Rights. Municipalities with Smokefree Beach Laws (2014) Maryland. Available at: <http://www.no-smoke.org/pdf/SmokefreeBeaches.pdf>

¹⁰ Americans for Nonsmokers' Rights. Municipalities with Smokefree Park Laws (2014) Maryland. Available at: <http://www.no-smoke.org/pdf/SmokefreeParks.pdf>

¹¹ Americans for Nonsmokers' Rights. (2014) Maryland. Available at: <http://no-smoke.org/goingsmokefree.php?id=143>

¹²The Right to Know Network. Toxic Release Inventory Database 312229: Other Tobacco Product Manufacturing Facilities (NAICS 312229) (2011). Compiled from data released by the U.S. EPA's Toxic Release Inventory database (TRI) on October 19, 2012.

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