

TOBACCO WASTE PRODUCTS: FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Is tobacco litter really a big problem?

Absolutely! Multiple litter studies have shown that cigarettes, cigarette butts and cigar tips are the most littered item in the United States.¹ They are discarded on roadways, sidewalks and numerous other areas.² This tobacco waste contains harmful chemicals such as arsenic, lead and cadmium that can leach into our soil and get into the food we eat.³ Additionally, tobacco waste can be swept into our streams and rivers by stormwater runoff and can harm the fish and wildlife that use these waterways,⁴ including the fish and wildlife in and around the Chesapeake Bay.

What are some common misconceptions about cigarette butts?

Many people believe that cigarette butts are too small to be considered “litter” and that they will decompose quickly. People need to understand that when dropped on the ground or elsewhere, cigarette butts are litter, just like carelessly discarded fast food containers or plastic bags.

Aren't cigarette butts biodegradable?

Not really. Filters in tobacco products are made from a plastic material (cellulose acetate) that is slow to biodegrade or does not degrade at all.⁵ Once tossed onto streets, sidewalks or beaches, the filters may break down into smaller pieces that can still leach toxins into the environment.

How does cigarette litter affect the economy?

Carelessly discarded cigarette butts can ignite fires that damage property and require firefighting resources to extinguish them. In 2012, 8 percent of wildfires in Maryland were ignited by lit tobacco products, resulting in 62 acres being burned.⁶

Cleaning up cigarette litter either by street sweeping, storm drain cleaning or park maintenance costs money, usually in the form of taxes. Retailers and other property owners bear the expense of cigarette litter cleanup at entrances, exits, and adjacent sidewalks and parking lots.

Additionally, cigarette litter is ugly. When it accumulates in places such as corners, gutters, business districts, waterfronts, roadways, and recreation areas, it makes the area look neglected and gives the sense that no one cares about the community. Areas that look neglected can experience a decrease in foot traffic, tourism and business development.

Why do smokers discard their cigarettes butts on the ground?

Many smokers aren't aware of the harm that littered cigarette butts and tobacco litter can do to the environment and wildlife. Very few people think about the economic impact of this litter. That's why it is important to educate everyone in a community – both smokers and nonsmokers – about the effects of tobacco litter, so that they can work together to create a healthy and safe environment for everyone.

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Tobacco litter hurts our planet. No butts about it.
NoTobaccoLitter.com

Maryland's
1-800  **QUIT NOW**
1-800-784-8669 SmokingStopsHere.com


MARYLAND
Department of Health
and Mental Hygiene

What can I do to reduce tobacco litter?

If you are a smoker, you have the most power to reduce tobacco waste.

- The best solutions to the tobacco waste problem are for nonsmokers to not start to smoke and for smokers to quit. Take advantage of the **FREE** Maryland Tobacco Quitline. Visit SmokingStopsHere.com or call **1-800-QUIT-NOW** for more information.

Everyone

- Value where you live, work and play; let others know you appreciate a smoke- and litter-free environment.
- Institute smoke-free practices in and around your business or property. Communicate your smoke-free zones clearly with signage.
- Businesses, community groups and other organizations can use the tools in this toolkit to conduct a Tobacco Waste Awareness Campaign.
- Implement a litter cleanup program as part of an overall Tobacco Waste Reduction Campaign.
- Reduce tobacco litter where you live - find more information on tobacco-free housing at www.mdsmokefreeliving.org.

¹Keep America Beautiful. National Visible Litter Survey and Litter Cost Study (2009). Retrieved January 16, 2015 from http://www.kab.org/site/DocServer/Final_KAB_Report_9-18-09.pdf?docID=4561

²Novotny TE, Lum K, Smith E, Wang V, Barnes R. Cigarettes Butts and the Case for an Environmental Policy on Hazardous Cigarette Waste. International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health. May 2009; 6(5):1691-1705. Available at: <http://www.mdpi.com/1660-4601/6/5/1691/htm>

³Moerman, J. W., and Potts, G. E. (2011). Analysis of Metals Leached from Smoked Cigarette Litter. Tobacco Control, 20(1): 30–35. Available at: <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3088461/pdf/tobaccocontrol40196.pdf>

⁴Ocean Conservancy. (2014). Turning the Tide on Trash: 2014 Report. Retrieved January 16, 2015 from <http://www.oceanconservancy.org/our-work/marine-debris/icc-data-2014.pdf>

⁵Legacy for Health. (2012). Tobacco Fact Sheet: The Impact of Tobacco on the Environment. Retrieved October 22, 2014 from http://www.legacyforhealth.org/content/download/583/6932/file/Fact_Sheet-The_Impact_of_Tobacco_on_the_Environment.pdf

⁶MD Department of Natural Resources. (2012). 2012 Annual Wildfire Report. Available at: <http://www.dnr.maryland.gov/forests/fire/pdfs/2012WildfireSummaryRpt.pdf>

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