

HOW TO ORGANIZE A TOBACCO LITTER/BUTT CLEANUP

Tobacco litter cleanups may be conducted in a variety of places. Some of the most common are: parks, beaches, neighborhoods, and college campuses. Typically, cigarette butts will be the most littered items you find; however, you may also want to consider picking up other forms of tobacco litter, such as cigar tips, cellophane wrappers and packaging. Below are useful tips for organizing a cleanup.

Planning Stage

- Identify a location that has a significant amount of tobacco litter.
- Contact the appropriate personnel at the designated location to determine if it's possible to host a cleanup at that location.
- Identify environmental groups or committees that may be interested in getting involved.
- Partner with environmental groups or committees that have the ability and interest to engage the community by: recruiting volunteers, preparing announcements, collecting survey data, and soliciting sponsorships for prizes and giveaways.
- Choose a date and time when the target community is available to participate. Consider conducting the cleanup during relevant observances already occurring, such as: Kick Butts Day (March), Earth Month (April), World No Tobacco Day (May), Great American Smokeout (November).
- Enlist the help of a local celebrity (a professional athlete or entertainer, for example) to help champion the cause of your cleanup and the importance of ending tobacco waste litter.
- Plan for the cleanup event to be about one (1) hour long.
- Use the items in this toolkit such as the posters, fact sheets, newsletter article and brochure to raise awareness in your organization about the detrimental environmental effects of tobacco litter.

4 Weeks Prior to the Event

- Contact your local government to determine if a permit is needed.
- Invite local leaders and the media to the cleanup.
- Distribute fliers advertising the cleanup in areas frequented by those you want to recruit as volunteers. Make sure the fliers include the date and location of the cleanup, how/where to sign up, and contact information of the organizer. Also provide an overview of the tobacco litter issue, how it relates to quality of life, public health, and protecting the environment.
- Map out the cleanup area. Based on the size of the area and amount of visible tobacco litter, determine how many volunteers will be needed for the cleanup to be a success.
- Recruit volunteers to participate. Volunteers may come from a variety of places—you may have the best luck recruiting student organizations related to public health, environment, or health care. If community service learning hours are available, they may serve as an incentive to attract volunteers. Be sure to keep a running tally of the number of volunteers recruited to ensure you recruit at least, if not more, volunteers than needed for the cleanup to be a success.

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1-2 Weeks Prior to the Event

- Prepare a liability waiver and photo release forms (if applicable) for participants to sign.
- Contact all volunteers to remind them about the event, reiterating the date, time, location, and where to meet. Also include: liability waivers, photo release forms, maps of the cleanup areas, and assigned duties. Sample duties would include: picking up all of the butts in their assigned area and counting the number of butts collected. Include what will be provided to them (bags, gloves, etc.) and make suggestions of what volunteers should bring themselves (water bottle, etc.).
- Contact local newspapers, cable television, and news stations to inform them about the cleanup, invite them to cover the event, and provide background information about the tobacco litter issue.
- Notify local businesses about the event and encourage them to donate prizes.

2 Days Prior to the Event

- Make follow-up calls to local media.
- Purchase large baggies or trash bags for collecting butts and multiple pairs of gloves for each volunteer.
- Organize and package supplies that need to be taken to the site (bags, gloves, markers, maps, etc.).

Day of Event

- Meet with volunteers prior to the start of the cleanup to answer questions and distribute supplies (gloves, plastic bags, and markers). Have maps with volunteer assignments readily available. Remind them to count the number of butts they collect. If collecting cigar tips or other tobacco litter, have them keep track of those as well, preferably in separate bags.
- Collect tobacco litter, place in bags and remind each volunteer to count them along the way.
- Take photos of volunteers collecting butts. Include before/after pictures of the cleanup areas.
- At the end of the cleanup, have each volunteer write the number of butts/litter collected on their bags.
- Place all of the collected butts/litter in large clear jars to display the number collected. This is a great visual that emphasizes the cleanup burden of tobacco litter. This is also a great way to re-emphasize the importance of a smoke-free environment, in conjunction with keeping the campus or public area clean and raising awareness about the environmental impacts of tobacco litter.
- Ask participants to guess how many butts/litter are in the jar and award a prize to the closest guess.
- Announce how many cigarette butts/litter were picked up via a press release, campus newspaper, and social media, and how this relates to the health and safety of the community and environment.
- Make sure to dispose of any trash and take all materials from the event with you.
- Use social media before, during, and after your event to invite others to join the cleanup and to track progress and results.

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