



Cigarette Butt Litter: The Facts

Cigarette butts aren't litter - ARE THEY??

Litter is any rubbish, no matter how small, thrown in an open or public place - and includes dropped cigarette butts on the ground. In fact cigarette butts are the most littered item in America.

Lack of awareness, lack of receptacles, and ordinances that move smokers outdoors all increase cigarette butt littering.

Why now?

- It is estimated that there are over 1.2 billion smokers worldwide who purchase and use over 5 trillion cigarettes each year, or 105 billion cigarettes per week.
- Of the cigarettes sold, 99% are smoked outdoors, which results in trillions of cigarette butts being littered each year, at a rate of approximately 2.3 million butts littered per minute.
- As more restaurants and public buildings become smoke-free areas, this number will only increase as smokers move outdoors to light up.

Where do dropped butts end up?

Cigarette butts are small and light and are easily blown from place to place or washed into the stormwater system which carries 1 in every 10 dropped butts into the our lakes, rivers, and streams.

The Costs of Cigarette Litter:

Residents and businesses pick up the tab

- Requires additional maintenance
- Owners bear expense of cleanup

Community quality of life suffers

- Decline in tourism, foot traffic, business, and housing development

Recreation areas become less attractive

- Cigarette butt litter decreases appeal of nature area

- Creates fire hazards, impacts to local wildlife, and contributes to lost tourism

Cigarette Butt Litter and the Environment:

Causes blight

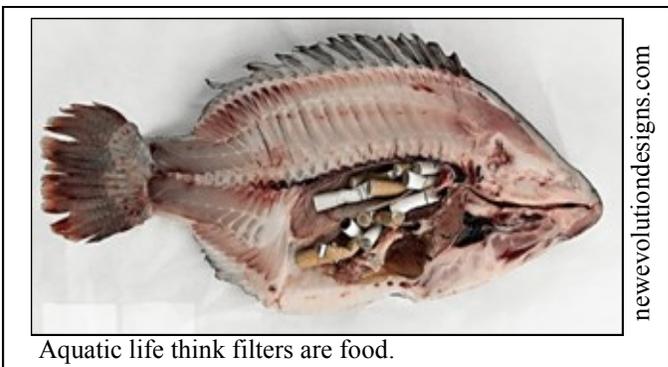
- Accumulates in gutters, along fencing, outside doorways, and at bus shelters
- Creates a sense of disorder

Cigarette butts don't disappear

- Butts are made of cellulose acetate, a plastic which can persist in the environment.
- Estimates of the biodegradability of cigarette butts is varied, some organizations state they take up to 10-15 years to break down.

Harmful to waterways and wildlife

- Littered butts leach toxic emissions (cadmium, lead, arsenic and zinc) into water and soil as they decompose, contributing to soil and water pollution and impacting wildlife habitat.
- When a cigarette butt does not actually make it to a water source, it can still contaminate aquatic ecosystems with tar, nicotine, and other potentially lethal toxins that leak into rain water as it flows over cigarette litter on its way to a body of water.
- Butts have been found in the stomachs of fish, birds, sea turtles and other marine creatures.



Aquatic life think filters are food.

Continued on the back

Cigarette Littering Misconceptions

Many smokers don't consider their behavior littering:

- Some believe dropping cigarette butts to the ground and stepping on them is acting responsibly
- Some drop butts into gutters or storm drains thinking this is a safe way to extinguish a cigarette
- Some blame littering on lack of ash receptacles

Since it's small, "it doesn't matter"

- Only 10% of cigarette butts are deposited in litter receptacles
- 35% of smokers toss five or more cigarette butts per pack on the ground

Most cigarette littering occurs at "TRANSITION POINTS"

- Area where a smoker must extinguish a cigarette before proceeding:
 - Outside retail stores, hotels, office buildings
 - Before entering beaches, parks or recreation areas
 - Bus shelters and rain platforms
 - Roadside rest areas and parking lots

Tips to Reduce Cigarette Butt Litter

Appropriate ash receptacles need to be available to smokers who have moved from buildings, businesses, bars and restaurants on to the sidewalks to smoke. Individuals who smoke must accept personal responsibility and choose not to litter.



Here's how everyone can help:

- **Don't throw butts out car windows.** Place cigarette butts in a car ashtray, a portable auto ashtray (which fits in the cup holder), or a container with a secure top like an empty bottle or snap-lid tin.
- **Carry a portable or pocket ashtray when smoking outside.** Encourage smokers to be aware of where their cigarette will be discarded when they light up. Whether smokers are outside public buildings, in parks, on beaches or city sidewalks, a little planning will reduce the number of butts that end up on the ground.
- **Use a receptacle to dispose of cigarette butts, packaging, and lighting material.** Ash receptacles are needed at the places where people must stop smoking before they proceed.
- **Be aware of local litter ordinances.** Many communities have litter ordinances that include cigarette butt litter. These are enforceable and carry penalties.

Sources Used:

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"Butt Littering" on buttfree.org.au
"Clean Virginia Waterways" at www.longwood.edu/cleanva/

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