

ARIZONA

IS OUR

HOME

LITTER FACT SHEET

LITTER IS UGLY, UNHEALTHY AND UNSAFE

- Ugly: More than 105,000 bags of litter were picked up from Valley freeways in 2020.
- Unhealthy: Toxic chemicals in cigarette butts can contaminate water systems.
- Unsafe: Debris on freeways causes 51,000 accidents in the U.S. every year, injuring nearly 10,000.

TYPES OF LITTER*

- Food/organic material - 33%
- Small pieces of paper - 11%
- Cigarette butts - 7%
- Food wrappers - 6%

HOW LONG DOES IT TAKE TO DECOMPOSE?

- Styrofoam container: More than 1 million years.
- Plastic jug: 1 million years.
- Aluminum can: 200 to 500 years.
- Plastic bag: 500 to 1000 years.
- Disposable diaper: 500 years.
- Banana peel: 3 weeks to 5 years.

LITTER ON FREEWAYS

- 51.2 billion pieces of litter are left on roadways in the U.S., equaling 6,729 pieces per mile.
- 425 bags of litter are removed each weekday from Valley freeways, totaling about 1.5 million pounds of litter each year.

LITTER COSTS

- The cost of a littering fine is \$500.
- Litter costs Maricopa County taxpayers \$5 million a year for the 150,000 hours of labor needed to clean up the Valley's roadways.
- Litter costs the Valley when it impacts efforts to attract new businesses and tourists.
- Litter costs the state economy in lost productivity, congestion and traffic delays when commuters sit in traffic because of litter in the through lanes.
- The cost of litter can be measured in lives: Nationally, about 125 people die every year from dangerous debris.

SECURE YOUR LOAD

- 45% of litter is accidental and comes from debris falling from trucks or from other unsecured loads.
- Unsecured loads can result in fines ranging from \$500 to \$1,000.

WHAT YOU CAN DO ABOUT HIGHWAY LITTER

- Keep and use a litterbag in your car at all times.
- Secure your loads with straps, tarps and nets. Be mindful of items that can blow out of or fall off your vehicle. Properly maintain your tires. Tire treads are easily worn out in Arizona's hot weather.
- Refrain from tossing out cigarette butts, the most common litter on the region's freeways. Keep a portable ashtray in your car.

Questions?

Contact 602-254-6300 to learn how you can help keep Arizona litter-free.

* Sources: Maricopa Association of Governments 2020 annual litter survey.