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Pollution
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County of Los Angeles DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC WORKS • Public Relations Group

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CIGARETTE BUTT LITTER IS CHOKING LOS ANGELES

(LOS ANGELES) – Each month, over half-a-million cigarette butts make their way around the County of Los Angeles. But these cigarette butts don't walk—they swim and sometimes even fly.

Cigarette butts are one of the most commonly littered items in the world. According to a survey conducted by the County of Los Angeles Department of Public Works, County residents drop a cigarette butt on the ground almost 600,000 times per month. That's more than seven million cigarette butts per year!

“Many Los Angeles residents don't realize that the cigarette butts they flick on the street or throw out of their car window can eventually end up in the ocean,” said Dean D. Efstathiou, Acting Director, County of Los Angeles Department of Public Works. “The impact of this litter on the environment, where we live and raise our children, is horrifying.”

Several local beachside communities banned smoking at their public beaches. One of the major goals is to keep the public from polluting in their communities and turning the ocean into an enormous outdoor ashtray.

Many of the carelessly tossed cigarette butts are picked up by the wind, leaf blowers or runoff (created by rain and over watered lawns) and are carried into the County's underground storm drain system. This system is designed to carry rainwater from the street to the ocean to prevent flooding, but it is often filled with litter and debris. These contaminants quickly turn the storm drain system into a trash superhighway, transporting litter from streets to local bodies of water, that lead to the ocean.

(more)

Cigarette Butt Litter

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A recent report by the Ocean Conservancy announced that six million pounds of trash was collected in just one day on beaches worldwide, including in the U.S., and that one-third of the items came from smokers.

While smoking bans will help reduce cigarette butt litter, Efstathiou urges County residents to take a few easy steps to help extinguish the problem. Some of these tips include:

- If you smoke, use an ashtray as it was intended and empty your car ashtray in the trash, not on the street. The purpose is to keep the butts off the street.
- If you're in the car and it doesn't have an ashtray, use a soda can until you can properly dispose of the butt.
- If you see butts on the street, sweep them up. Never use a hose to spray them down the storm drain.
- When possible, keep a mini trash bag in the car. This will not only help you remember to properly dispose of your butts in an ashtray, but it's the correct way to dispose of your trash.
- Be a part of the solution. If you're smoking outside, search for a nearby ashtray.

“The solution is simple, always use an ashtray to properly dispose of your cigarette butts. If you don't, the cigarette butt you throw on the ground today may end up swimming next to you at the beach this summer.”

For more information about local pollution, please call 1 (888)CLEAN LA or log on to www.888CleanLA.com.

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About the County of Los Angeles Department of Public Works

The County of Los Angeles Department of Public Works services range from road and flood control system maintenance, construction programs, building and safety services, traffic signals and street signs for the 130 unincorporated communities in the County. As the Principal Permittee for the State's Municipal NPDES Permit System, the County of L.A. Department of Public Works oversees public education and information programs designed to reach the 10 million residents of the County of Los Angeles with crucial messages about protecting the environment. These programs are part of a comprehensive effort to help residents understand the impact they have on the environment and the steps they can take to protect and improve it.