

# Litter Fact Sheet

Litter is misplaced, improperly handled waste. In a three-year research project, Keep America Beautiful, Inc. (KAB) found that people litter for one of three reasons:

1. People litter where other litter has already accumulated.
2. People litter when they believe someone else will pick up after them.
3. People litter where they feel no sense of ownership in or responsibility for areas in the community we all share, such as streets, parks, sidewalks, waterways, etc

KAB places special emphasis on quality of life issues such as litter, graffiti, and illegal dumping, because these forms of environmental blight are caused in large part by individual behaviors, and can be prevented almost entirely by adjustments in individual behavior.

## Where Does Litter Come From? 7 Sources of litter:

1. Pedestrians
2. Drivers
3. Household Garbage Cans
4. Commercial Dumpsters
5. Construction Sites and Demolition Sites
6. Loading Docks
7. Trucks with Uncovered Loads

Litter is carried in every direction by wind, water and traffic. It moves until trapped by a curb, wall, fence, row of trees, a building, or other stationary object. Once trapped, litter becomes not only an eyesore, but an invitation for people to add more.

Cost: Litter costs our Communities billions of dollars each year to clean up. Money that could be better spent on schools, housing, transportation, policing, recreation, social services, and other local priorities. For more information contact: Chip Brown @ U.S. Conference of Mayors (202) 861-6715.

Crime: Many local leaders believe that an ignored litter program can have measurably negative impacts on the fight against crime and the equally important quest for local economic development. The Florida Center for Solid and Hazardous Waste Management at the University of Florida is in the midst of a comprehensive study of this issue. Questions on the ongoing research can be directed to them at (352) 392-6264. Litter can be a precursor to systemic community decline in a wide range of categories. It can invite further plight in the local government and other problems for the society at large...the "broken window" theory. It can sabotage even the most ambitious economic development or community renewal programs. For more info contact: Sociologist Victoria Wilson (215) 575-2210, or Criminologist George Kelling (603) 643-8369

It takes just a second to litter. Guess how long it takes for the litter to decompose...

Styrofoam Cup	Up to 5 years
Plastic Container	10 to 20 years
Cigarette Filter	70 to 80 years
Aluminum Can	200 to 500 years
Piece of Paper	2 to 2 weeks
Cotton Rag	1 to 5 months
Glass Container	NEVER