

Something that annoys
you



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

Everyone in life has something that annoys them, I have a thousand things that bother me. One thing that annoys me the most is when people litter their cigarette butts. Cigarette butts are the most commonly discarded piece of waste worldwide. The sight of disposed cigarettes is not only an unpleasant sight but disposing butts into the environment does a lot more damage than people realize. Most people are aware of the health risks involved in smoking, few seem to realize that cigarettes are also bad for the environment.

Cigarette butt littering has an environmental, economic and social impact on the community. The most noticeable is the impact that butts have on our environment. There is a lot of misinformation out there regarding cigarette butt litter. People who smoke think that because butts are so small, they are relatively harmless. Cigarette filters are specifically designed to gather together particulate smoke components, including toxic chemicals such as cadmium, lead, arsenic and zinc. The biggest myth is that cigarette filters are biodegradable. Cigarette butts are not biodegradable.

It's estimated that trillions of filters, filled with toxic chemicals from tobacco smoke, make their way into our environment as discarded waste yearly. The plastic filters can take many years to decompose. Smokers may not realize that their actions have such a lasting, negative impact on the environment. Absolutely everything about cigarettes can threaten life on our beloved planet. They pollute the ground we walk on and the air we breathe. And if we smoke, cigarettes poison us slowly, stealing our quality of life long before they kill us.

Cigarette butts may seem small, but with several trillion butts littered every year, the toxic chemicals add up! Three side effects of littering cigarette butts that annoy me the most are, our polluted water, endangered wildlife and the fires caused due to cigarette littering. Cigarette smoke contains up to 4, 000 chemicals so each second the butt is left alight, dangerous toxins are released into the environment. Many people don't realize that when it rains, water flowing through our streets, down our drains and through our storm water pipes ends up in our harbors, beaches and rivers.

Storm water is not treated so all litter and cigarette butts carried by storm water are dumped directly into these waterways. When cigarette butts are discarded on the ground, many of the toxic chemicals will leach out of the cigarette and will run in to the lakes and oceans. Cigarette butts can leach chemicals such as cadmium, lead and arsenic into our marine environment within an hour of contact with water. Cigarette butts can take up to 12 months to break down in fresh water and up to 5 years to break down in seawater. According to the Audubon Society, smoke-free beach laws help reduce butts on beaches by 45%.

Cigarette waste accounts for almost a third of the total amount of litter found on US shorelines alone. Cigarette butts are not just ugly, they also present a threat to wildlife. Plastic pieces have been found in the stomachs of fish, birds, whales and other marine creatures that mistake them for food. Cigarette butts have been found in the stomachs of fish, whales, birds and other marine animals which leads to ingestion of hazardous chemicals and digestive blockages. The pieces can get lodged in an animal's intestinal tract or build up in its stomach, which can often lead to the animal's death.

This litter reduces water quality and potentially harms our precious marine life. Ingestion of plastic cigarette filters is a continuing threat to wildlife. Chemicals in cigarette butts easily leach out of the butts, and are deadly to small but important animals that live in most freshwater lakes and streams as well as the ocean. Discarded cigarette butts pose a significant threat to our environment in terms of fire. Every year, forest fires bring heavy destruction to areas, killing off wildlife and vegetation that take years to return.

Some of those fires are started by natural causes; drought, and lightening. But according to the National Fire Protection Agency, upwards of 90, 000 fires every year in the United States alone are caused by cigarettes. Cigarette-induced fires claim hundreds of lives in the United States each year, and injure thousands more, not to mention the millions of dollars that go up in smoke in property damage. Flicked butts can cause fires. When thrown from a motor vehicle into dried grass butts can start a grassfire or even a bushfire. Fires destroy habitats for animals, and homes.

According to the American Burn Association, about 900 people in the United States die each year in fires started by cigarettes, and about 2, 500 are injured. About 100 of the fire deaths each year are children and nonsmokers. Nationally, annual human and property costs of fires caused by careless smoking total about \$6 billion. In 1997, there were more than 130, 000 cigarette related fires. A cigarette-caused fire is currently responsible for one of the largest forest fires in Canadian history. The smoker has been identified, but Canadian authorities are trying to determine whether he should be charged with a crime.

People who throw cigarette butts out of cars while driving are completely clueless to the deathly accidents they can cause. It has been suggested that cigarette butts represent the biggest litter problem facing the world today. There are many reasons why cigarette butts are such a huge environmental issue. First of all, most people don't think of them as litter. Cigarette butts contain all the carcinogenic chemicals, pesticides, and nicotine that make tobacco use the leading cause of preventable death worldwide, yet they are commonly, unconsciously dumped by the trillions (5. trillions and counting) into the global environment each year. A recent study showed that cigarette waste easily meets standardized tests for city and state agencies to label a substance as toxic waste. Smokers are now spending most of their time smoking outdoors and tossing their butts away on the concrete rather than putting them in to a receptacle. It is very common for highly littered items such as soda cans, snack wrappers, and fast food containers to have a simple " Please Don't Litter" message. You won't find such a message on cigarette packs.

Tobacco companies used filters as a marketing tool in an effort to allay fears about the harm caused by cigarettes, even after the companies knew that filters did not reduce risk. Plastic bags have been banned in a number of communities, and plastic tampon inserters have been considered for regulation by several states as environmental hazards and beach blight. The plastic cigarette filter could also be banned to reduce a huge source of unsightly, non-biodegradable plastic waste. Prohibitions on smoking in enclosed spaces have reduced indoor air pollution and related health risks for millions.

Certainly, prohibitions on smoking in outdoor public places, including parks, beaches and even outdoor urban areas will prevent some butt waste flowing into our aquatic environments. Cigarette butt waste is the last socially acceptable form of littering in what has become an increasingly health and environmentally conscious world. The best way to educate the public about this serious environmental problem is to start with people you know. If someone you know litters their cigarettes it is important you educate them on the deadly harm they are causing to themselves and to the environment.