

# LITTER PREVENTION GUIDE



## Questions & Answers

### What is Litter?

Litter is misplaced, improperly disposed of solid waste. Litter not only is a problem, it is a crime. The largest single product group littered in Louisiana, according to a 1990 survey of visible litter, is take-out food packaging, including cups, napkins, plates, bags, etc. Candy and snack packaging is second followed by beverage containers and cigarettes. Yes, improperly disposed cigarettes are considered litter.

Another state-wide problem is deliberate indiscriminate dumping of large objects and piles of garbage in public rights-of-way, vacant property and isolated roadways.

### Who are Deliberate Litterers?

Studies indicate that in urban areas, deliberate littering is by young persons, mostly males, between the ages of 10 and 24. In rural areas deliberate littering is by slightly older persons, ages 15 to 29. Accidental littering; however, is caused by adults, overwhelmingly males, age 25 to 55.

### Why Do People Litter?

People think its okay to litter:

- When they feel no sense of ownership for the property.
- When they know someone else will clean up after them.
- Where litter has already accumulated.

### Where Does All the Litter Come From?

Keep America Beautiful, a national nonprofit organization that educates individuals about litter prevention and ways to reduce, reuse, recycle and properly manage waste materials, identifies seven sources of litter:

- dumpsters;
- household trash handling;
- construction sites;
- loading docks;
- uncovered vehicles;
- motorists; and
- pedestrians

## **How Does Litter Affect Me?**

- It affects you in the pocketbook. In Louisiana, taxpayers spend more than \$14 million a year removing litter from our roadways.
- It decreases the dollars brought into your parish. Litter can drive away tourists, new businesses and new jobs.
- It decreases your property values.
- It is a health risk to you and your pets. It attracts rodents (that may carry diseases) in and around your home.
- It affects the safety you desire for you and your family. Criminals thrive where trash and old, abandoned homes provide a place to hide.
- It affects how others perceive your community. It encourages additional littering and illegal dumping.

## **Where does St. Tammany's Waste Go?**

St. Tammany's waste, outside of municipalities, is delivered to one of two private solid waste transfer stations, Stranco Solid Waste Management and Waste Management of St. Tammany Pickup Station, both located north of the Parish Administrative Complex on Highway 59. The waste is then shipped to a receiving solid waste landfill located outside our Parish. Parish residents may take garbage to either of the two transfer stations as well.

Independent garbage haulers will not accept appliances, i.e. refrigerators, unless an authorized company has removed the freon, severed the line and placed a sticker on the refrigerator as proof. Other items independent garbage haulers will not accept include batteries, tires, and hazardous materials.

## **How Can I Help?**

- Set an example by not littering. Keep your trash in your car until you can properly dispose of it.
- Report litter violators to the proper enforcement agencies.
- Help coordinate litter cleanup days in your community.
- Educate your children and others about litter prevention.
- Keep a litter bag in your car.
- Make sure your trash can has a lid and that you cover your trash.

- Adopt a segment of a roadway to keep it clean throughout the year.

### **If St. Tammany recycles, what should I recycle?**

St. Tammany promotes recycling through the Parish's independent solid waste haulers. The Parish encourages recycling newspapers (excluding magazines), tin cans, aluminum cans, plastic milk jugs and soft drink bottles (excluding bleach, detergent and cheese and margarine containers), and glass food and drink containers.

Because recycling markets and specific items vary, contact your independent hauler to verify items that you can effectively recycle.

Just as important as curbside recycling, the Parish encourages establishing home compost programs for yard waste such as grass and leaves. Home composting programs substantially reduce the amount of waste that must be sent to a landfill.

### **How Do I Report Someone for Littering?**

There are numerous ways to report littering. You can contact the St. Tammany Parish Sheriff's Office or any St. Tammany Parish constable or justice of the peace.

### **If I See Someone Throwing Litter from a Vehicle, What Should I Do?**

Commit to paper the date and time of day, specific location where the littering occurred, the make, model, year, and license plate of the vehicle from which the litter was thrown. Then contact the proper authorities. Never confront the litter violator. Leave this to the authorities.

### **What should I do if I see abandoned cars, appliances, bags of garbage that have been dumped on vacant property or public rights of way?**

Commit to paper the date and time of day, specific location where the dumping occurred, the make, model, year, and license plate of the vehicle from which the garbage was thrown, and, if possible, a description of the person(s) dumping. Then contact the proper authorities. Never confront the litter violator. Leave this to the authorities.

### **What if I see garbage or debris fly out of a garbage hauler's vehicle, uncovered trucks, or the back of a pickup truck?**

Commit to paper the date and time of day, specific location where the dumping occurred, the make, model, year, and license plate of the vehicle from which the

garbage was thrown, and any company identification. Contact the proper authorities. Never confront the litter violator.

### **What can I do about garage sale, for sale, or political signs on public rights of way?**

Any sign, other than official highway signs, placed in a public right-of-way will be considered litter. Outside of municipalities, anyone wishing to display political signs in any part of the Parish must obtain a temporary sign permit from the Department of Planning.

### **Must I Identify Myself When Reporting a Litter Violator?**

Contact your Justice of the Peace to determine what he or she requires.

### **What Happens if Someone Receives a Citation for Littering?**

Depending on the number of convictions on one's record, littering can result in fines ranging from \$50 to \$3,000 and could include community service in a litter abatement work program, suspension of motor vehicle driver's license for one year, and imprisonment for up to 30 days.

## **Facts**

### **History**

St. Tammany Parish President's Office began its Litter Reduction Campaign in 2001. Because St. Tammany is one of the fastest growing parishes in the nation, litter reduction must be addressed. This initiative includes enforcement, education and environmental cleanups.

### **Participants**

St. Tammany Parish President's Administration, Sheriff's Department, 22nd Judicial District Court, District Attorney's office, School Board, Justices of the Peace and Constables, Louisiana Department of Environmental Quality, Governor's Special Task Force, and concerned citizens.

### **Parish Statistics**

One of the largest parishes in the state, St. Tammany Parish, outside of municipalities, maintains 1,600 miles of roadways available for the adopt-a-road program.

In 2000, more than 250 tons of garbage was collected daily in St. Tammany Parish. At a cost of \$45 per ton, taxpayers spent more than \$2.9 million collecting

and disposing of their garbage. St. Tammany's average solid waste per person per day is 4.5 pounds.

While the national average of solid waste that is diverted from landfills due to recycling is slightly less than 30 percent, St. Tammany's current recycling rate is approximately 10 percent.

|   |                 |
|---|-----------------|
| Statistics indicate the life of litter as:  |                 |
| Orange/banana peels                         | Up to 2 years   |
| Cigarette butts                             | 1 - 5 years     |
| Plastic bags                                | 10 - 20 years   |
| Nylon fabric                                | 30 - 40 years   |
| Tin cans                                    | 50 years        |
| Leather                                     | Up to 50 years  |
| Aluminum cans & tabs                        | 80 - 100 years  |
| Plastic 6-pack holders                      | 100 years       |
| Glass bottles                               | 1 million years |
| Plastic bottles                             | Indefinitely    |
| Source: Foghorn Newsletter, Friends of Gaia |                 |

### **Litter Cleanup Day or Adopt- A-Road Application Form**

An organization, business, organization or individual may choose to cleanup a parish road at will or adopt a road for regular maintenance.

If the requested road has been adopted by another organization or individual, Environmental Services will work with the group leader or individual to select another suitable road.

Download and complete the Adopt-A-Road Application form and mail or fax it to St. Tammany Parish Environmental Services.

St. Tammany Parish  
Department of Environmental Services  
P.O. Box 628  
Covington, LA 70434

Fax number: (985) 898-2535

## **Adopt-A-Road Program**

The St. Tammany Adopt-A-Road Program is a volunteer litter reduction and prevention campaign to remove litter from parish roadways and rights of way and to improve the aesthetic appearance of our parish.

St. Tammany Parish is committed to reducing litter along parish roadways and wishes to partner with its citizens, civic organizations and businesses to achieve mutual goals.

Volunteer groups can adopt a road or section(s) of a road by removing litter on a minimum of a two-mile section of road, four times a year for a two-year period.

### **What will I receive?**

A litter safety kit including safety vests, gloves, trash bags and a first aid kit.  
Adopt-a-Road sign located at the beginning of the adopted road section recognizing the adopting organization.

### **How does the program work?**

Individuals, nonprofit organizations, businesses or families can apply.  
Decide which two-mile section of roadway your group wishes to adopt.  
Schedule four litter cleanup day(s) per year for two years.

### **How do I apply?**

Download and complete the Adopt-A-Road Application form and mail or fax it to St. Tammany Parish Environmental Services.

St. Tammany Parish  
Department of Environmental Services  
P.O. Box 628  
Covington, LA 70434

Fax number: (985) 898-2535

## **Adopt-A-Road Agreement**

The group leader or individual should read and complete this agreement. Please mail the signed agreement to St. Tammany Parish Environmental Services (address follows). Environmental Services must receive the signed form 10 working days before the first cleanup can be scheduled. This agreement defines the responsibilities of the Parish and the group or individual.

By executing the agreement, the group leader or individual acknowledges awareness that the safety of its employees/volunteers/families is critically important and agrees to the following terms and conditions:

**Contractor Terms and Conditions:**

- Participants shall collect litter on a predetermined section of parish road or neighborhood area that has been approved by the Parish.
- Participants must be 14 years of age or older. The Contractor shall furnish supervision of one adult for every three children under the age of 14.
- Participants shall sign a hold harmless agreement prior to their participation in the litter cleanup. In the case of minors, the parent/guardian must sign his/her approval for his/her child to participate.
- The Contractor shall remove litter from the minimum adopted area of two miles, and a minimum of four times annually for a two-year period.
- The Contractor shall contact the Parish 10 working days prior to the litter cleanup day to obtain a litter safety kit and to request garbage pickup on the day of the litter cleanup.
- The Contractor shall place filled trash bags at designated locations for collection by the independent garbage hauler.
- The Contractor shall return unused litter safety kit materials to the Parish within two working days following the litter cleanup day.
- All participants shall wear safety equipment at all times when at the site. Group size is limited to the amount of safety equipment provided.
- Participants shall not touch anything that might be hazardous or cause injury. The leader shall report these items to the Parish (985-898-2535) or the police. Questions about hazardous materials should be directed to the Parish (985- 898-2535).
- Participants shall not use mind-altering substances prior to or while participating in the litter cleanup.

**Parish Terms and Conditions:**

- Furnish and install a permanent sign with the Contractor's name or logo or acronym at the adopted area.
- Provide a litter safety kit, containing trash bags, first aid kit, gloves, and safety vests.
- Help assign an independent garbage hauler to remove the filled trash bags.
- Assist the Contractor in cleaning up litter under unusual circumstances, i.e., when large, heavy, hazardous items are found.

Download & mail the completed agreement form to:  
St. Tammany Parish  
Department of Environmental Services  
P.O. Box 628  
Covington, LA 70434

## Litter Cleanup Dos and Don'ts

### Do(s):

- Do appoint a group leader.
- Do contact St. Tammany Parish Department of Environmental Services 10 working days prior to your cleanup day to arrange pickup of your litter safety kits, and to assign an independent garbage hauler to remove filled garbage bags.
- Do contact the St. Tammany Parish Sheriff's Office 10 working days prior to your litter cleanup day to request deputies for traffic patrol.
- Do get all participants to sign the hold harmless agreement and give to Parish.
- Do wear safety gloves and vest at all times while participating in the litter cleanup.
- Do wear long pants, long-sleeved shirts, closed-toe shoes, sun screen, and insect repellent, if appropriate.
- Do follow the rules of the road as they pertain to pedestrians.
- Do bring appropriate supply of water to the cleanup site.
- Do return the litter safety kits and unused trash bags to the predetermined location within two days of the litter cleanup day.
- Do inform St. Tammany Parish Department of Environmental Services of hazardous, heavy or large items.
- Do wash hands after the cleanup.
- Do thank yourselves for keeping St. Tammany Clean.

### Don't(s):

- Don't select roads that do not have shoulders. are heavily trafficked, or where speed limits exceed miles per hour.
- Don't schedule cleanups during peak traffic days and hours.
- Don't conduct cleanups near construction sites.
- Don't conduct cleanups in rainy weather.
- Don't overstuff bags.
- Don't allow children under the age of 14 to participate in the litter cleanup without having one adult supervisor for every three children.
- Don't touch anything that may be hazardous or cause injury, such as:
  - broken glass
  - furniture
  - batteries
  - rusted car parts
  - animal carcasses
  - hypodermic needles and syringes
  - condoms
  - appliances, i.e., refrigerators
  - tires
  - creosote posts

## **Hold Harmless Agreement**

Each volunteer participating in the litter cleanup effort must sign a hold harmless agreement. For individuals under the age of 18, a consenting parent or guardian must sign on their behalf. These consent forms must be forwarded to St. Tammany Parish Department of Environmental Services.

Download Hold Harmless Agreement from our website and fax or mail completed form to:

St. Tammany Parish  
Department of Environmental Services  
P.O. Box 628  
Covington, LA 70434

Fax number: (985) 898-2535

## **Safety Kit Contents**

St. Tammany Parish Litter Prevention Safety Kit contains items to protect volunteers from potential hazards on parish roads during litter cleanup efforts. Please use all equipment during litter cleanup efforts.

Please contact the St. Tammany Parish Department of Environmental Services department 10 working days prior to your litter cleanup day to reserve and to schedule pickup of your litter safety kits.

The following are items you will find in the St. Tammany Parish Litter Prevention Safety Kit:

- Safety gloves
- Orange, reflective safety vest
- One first aid kit for every 50 people
- Orange trash bags.
- Please verify you have all items in the desired quantities. Please return unused items to the predetermined location within two working days after your litter cleanup day.