



There is a long list of reasons why you shouldn't flick your cigarette butt onto the ground. But if you ask most people, they don't think of improperly discarded cigarette butts as litter! However, these little butts pile up into a GLOBAL problem. Improperly discarded cigarette butts are the number one piece of litter found in oceans worldwide!



Little cigarette butts pile into a global problem.

“Oceans,” you say? “Well, I’m in Memphis. I don’t live near the ocean.”

Well, cigarette butts are also the most prevalent form of litter found in America and we live next to the biggest river in America. The river connects to the Gulf of Mexico and the Gulf of Mexico to the Ocean.

So now you ask, “How do cigarette butts get into the river?”

Cigarette butts get into the river through the storm water drainage system, our direct unfiltered link to our surrounding waterways. Toss that butt on a street or parking lot and it will make its way to a storm drain. Read below for eye opening facts on why we say ‘Memphis- Don’t Flick It!’

Cigarette Butts are NOT biodegradable. 99% of the 360 billion cigarettes sold have cellulose acetate (plastic) filters; at least one-third of those 120 billion are discarded into the environment. Decomposition time for cigarette filters vary per study and range from 10-25 years for the plastic to completely breakdown. That means it has PLENTY of time for the elements to carry it to a storm drain. Upon entering the storm drain, the cigarette butt will

travel across the watershed to the ocean.

Cigarette butts can be eaten by wildlife such as fish and birds. A more home-striking concern could be how quickly an inquisitive toddler can pick one up and put it in their mouth. When ingested, the cigarette butt carries with it all the carcinogenic chemicals such as arsenic, nicotine, polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons, and the heavy metals that are contained within the filter.

When left in the environment, the filters slowly leech the chemicals and heavy metals into storm water runoff and surrounding waterbodies. These chemicals alone are toxic to wildlife. A single cigarette butt that had traces of tobacco was immersed within a liter of water in a study performed by Eli Slaughter of San Diego University. The result was a rise in the toxicity levels within the water. The toxicity levels in the water killed half of the fish within it.

Butts represent the most numerous form of trash picked up from beaches. During the Ocean Conservancy cleanup in 2014, more than two million cigarette parts were collected around the world—double the amount of both food and beverage containers. Cities spend your taxpayer dollars to clean up litter (cigarette butts included). And it still isn't enough to get it all.

The City of Memphis Storm Water Program wants to remind citizens that improperly disposed cigarette butts are a storm water pollutant and are detrimental to the environment. The solution is simple. Memphis- Don't Flick It! The time that it takes for this tiny piece of litter to decompose, coupled with the overwhelming frequency in which it is littered, makes it quite impactful. Put them in ashtrays and extinguished butts can go in the trash where they belong.

Sources: www.cjgwaste.org , <http://news.Nationalgeographic.com> , <http://beachapedia.org> , http://sdsu-dspace.calstate.edu/bitstream/handle/10211.10/599/Slaughter_Elli.pdf?sequence=1 , <http://www.oceanconservancy.org> , www.kab.org , <http://memphiscitybeautiful.org>



Cigarette Butts belong in the trash.