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## **Cigarette Butts: The Most Dangerous Litter**



As Arizona faces some of the worst forest fires in its history, many of us ponder the environmental impacts of such devastation and ways to prevent it in the future. With our state's hot, dry weather, fires are a major concern throughout the summer and can be the result of many factors. Numerous fires that occur in Arizona are human-caused-some are intentional, but many are accidental and the result of carelessness. Failure to properly extinguish a campfire is a common cause, or even worse, the reckless discarding of a cigarette butt from a moving vehicle.

Cigarette butts are the most commonly littered items in our state. People tend to believe that tossing a cigarette butt isn't actually littering, or they believe that something so small won't have an impact. Unfortunately, they couldn't be more wrong, as cigarette butts have some of the worst environmental repercussions. Not only can improperly-extinguished cigarette butts littered from vehicles cause fires, they also can have a dangerous impact on our water supply.

Cigarette butts littered onto highways contain a variety of toxic chemicals, and when it rains, these butts can travel through storm drains straight into waterways, such as canals, lakes, rivers, and they often end up at the water treatment plants that supply our drinking water. Those that are not washed away and remain alongside our roadways can still impact our water supply when the chemicals soak down into groundwater tables.

The time for recognizing these hazards is now. While currently seeing some of our driest conditions, June also marks the beginning of the state's monsoon, which continues to ramp up during the "wet" months of July, August and September. In fact, Arizona gets 32 percent of its annual rainfall during these months. As we head deeper into summer, think about the dangerous results that a tossed cigarette butt can have, both in dry and wet weather. Do what you can, starting with making sure all cigarette butts are properly extinguished and by keeping a portable ashtray in your car.

For more information on highway littering or to link to more information on Arizona's monsoon, visit [www.DontTrashAZ.com](http://www.DontTrashAZ.com)



The advertisement features a yellow, crumpled paper background. At the top, there are two logos: the Maricopa Association of Governments logo (a stylized mountain range) and the ADOT logo (a stylized purple and green circular design). Below the logos, four game icons are displayed: 'TICKET TOSS' showing a car race, 'OB LITTERATOR' showing a car with litter, 'WRAP MY RIDE' showing a car with a trash can, and 'TRASH TRIVIA' showing a trivia game interface. At the bottom, the text reads 'Click here to play our new online games!' with a red underline.

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