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Littering of Cups, Cans and Butts Decreases in Maricopa County

Survey Shows Positive Changes in Littering Awareness and Behavior

PHOENIX (Oct. 19, 2012) – A recent survey commissioned by the Maricopa Association of Governments (MAG) finds that Maricopa County residents who admit to littering soda cans, bottles and cigarette butts decreased by half from the previous year, while the number of admitted litterers who littered while driving decreased by 16 percent.

“The MAG *Don’t Trash Arizona* program and its new campaign, ‘*No Cups, Cans or Butts!*’ have influenced positive changes in awareness and behavior when it comes to reducing the most commonly littered items on our Valley freeways,” said MAG Chair Marie Lopez Rogers, mayor of Avondale. “This is encouraging, because litter has serious economic, health, safety, and environmental impacts.” The survey was conducted in August of 600 Maricopa County residents at a 95% confidence level.

A similar survey conducted last year revealed that the most commonly littered items from vehicles included beverage containers and cigarette butts. In response, *Don’t Trash Arizona* revamped its key messages to focus on those littered items with a new slogan, “*No Cups, Cans or Butts. Don’t Trash Arizona!*” The campaign targets males between the ages of 18 and 34, identified as the primary litterers in the Valley. Outreach and education has focused on places this audience frequents, including movie theaters, sporting events, targeted radio stations, gas stations and convenience stores.

The scientifically-valid telephone survey, conducted by WestGroup Research, showed a decrease from 13 percent to six percent for soda cans and bottles, and a decrease from 12 percent to five percent for cigarette butts being littered by Maricopa County residents. Additionally, only four percent of smokers indicated they toss cigarette butts out of vehicle windows, which is a 69 percent decrease in mentions from last year.

Other key findings include:

- While males between the ages of 18 and 34 are still the primary litterers, the number of those having littered in the past year decreased by nine percent.
- 38 percent of admitted litterers **do not** litter while driving, which is an increase from 33 percent in 2011.
- 71 percent of pickup truck drivers indicated that, on average, they “always” secure items in the back of their pickup truck, which is an increase of 31 percent from last year
- The most common reason mentioned for littering when driving was that no trash receptacles were nearby or convenient.
- Approximately 16% of smokers indicated they do not smoke in the car at all, representing a 700 percent increase from the previous year (2%).

One finding of the survey was not as encouraging. This year, an increase occurred in the percentage of residents classified as “Admitted Litterers” (33%, up from 26% in 2011).

“Although the number of people who littered while driving decreased, it is concerning that the number of people in Maricopa County who admitted to littering overall increased,” said Lopez Rogers. “It’s encouraging to see that highway littering of cups, cans and butts is down, but we recognize there is still more work to be done.”

A full copy of the survey and key findings is available at www.DontTrashAZ.com.

About *Don’t Trash Arizona*

Don’t Trash Arizona is a joint effort between MAG and the Arizona Department of Transportation to address the economic, safety, and health impacts of freeway litter along regional and state highways. The program is funded through Proposition 400, which was approved by voters in 2004. That funding encompasses litter pickup, sweeping, and landscape maintenance, as well as litter education and prevention. *Don’t Trash Arizona* seeks to change attitudes, awareness, and most importantly, behavior, when it comes to roadway littering. Visit www.DontTrashArizona.com for more information.

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