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Biodegradable? Don't Toss it Out the Window!

Don't Trash Arizona Reminds Motorists: Apples, Oranges, Bananas Are Still Litter

PHOENIX (Feb. 28, 2013) — You may like to “eat, eat, eat, apples and bananas” as the kid’s song goes, but don’t throw those items out the window or risk a \$500 littering fine. The Maricopa Association of Governments (MAG)’s anti-littering campaign, *Don't Trash Arizona*, wants to remind motorists that biodegradable trash is still litter and should be discarded properly in a garbage receptacle.

“It’s a common misconception that tossing food or other organic material on the ground is acceptable because it is biodegradable,” said Avondale Mayor and MAG Chair Marie Lopez Rogers. “However, what many people don’t realize is that it can take weeks, months, or even years for biodegradable items to completely decompose, and in the meantime, that ‘natural’ piece of litter is creating an eyesore and endangering wildlife.”

Food and other organic materials continue to be among the most commonly littered items. In fact, in a recent MAG survey, 40 percent of litterers in Maricopa County admitted to tossing these items on the ground. While it’s true that food, such as an apple core or banana peel, will eventually decompose, it can take up to two years to break down. In the meantime, that unsightly litter on the roadside will tend to attract more litter, since research has found that people are much more likely to throw trash in areas where there is existing litter. This exponentially increases the amount of litter on the roadside, creating an ugly and unhealthy environment.

Food and organic litter can also attract rodents and wildlife, including javelinas and coyotes. With wildlife attracted to litter along the freeway, this can create a dangerous situation for motorists and these animals.

Don't Trash Arizona hopes that all Valley drivers will come to understand that all litter—even if it’s biodegradable—is ugly, unhealthy and unsafe. To help encourage drivers to keep this trash in their cars and throw it away in a garbage can later, *Don't Trash Arizona* offers free, reusable and recyclable litter bags for Arizona residents. Residents can sign up for a bag on the *Don't Trash Arizona* website at www.DontTrashArizona.com.

About *Don't Trash Arizona*

Don't Trash Arizona is a joint effort between the Maricopa Association of Governments 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.