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Hit the Road with Safe, Fun and Litter-Free Summer Trips

Don't Trash Arizona Offers Tips for Keeping Highways Clean

PHOENIX (May 16, 2013) — School is out, the sun is shining and the sweet adventures of summertime are finally upon us. The perfect time to say ‘goodbye’ to stresses and ‘hello’ to wide open highways, the road trip season means motorists are out in full force and Arizona’s roadways are experiencing the effects.

Though summer allows for more spontaneous travel than any other season, motorists must still plan ahead to ensure their adventure is a safe one for themselves and the environment. According to the Maricopa Association of Governments (MAG), the organization behind the “*No Cups, Cans or Butts – Don't Trash Arizona*” initiative, the state’s roadways take an extra beating each summer from the fast food wrappers, beverage containers, cigarette butts and blown-out tire treads that can accumulate when road trippers fail to prepare properly.

This summer, drivers can ensure a safe and litter-free road trip by following some advanced-planning strategies:

- Extra plastic bags, such as recycled grocery shopping bags, make for great trash receptacles while on the road. Although research finds that about 60 percent of litter is intentional, typically occurring in places where debris has already accumulated, it’s important to note that ALL litter is preventable. Littering—whether accidental or intentional—is a class three misdemeanor, punishable by up to \$500 in fines.
- Keep a portable ashtray in the car for getting rid of cigarette butts. For newer vehicles that don’t have an ashtray, drivers can use an empty soda can instead. By discarding cigarette butts properly, drivers help keep the roadway clean, prevent toxic chemicals from contaminating the water system, and help reduce the incidence of wildfires started from sparks igniting dry brush and trash commonly found along desert highways.
- Properly maintain vehicle tires. The summer heat wreaks havoc on rubber, causing it to dry out and crack. To help avoid a tire blowout, drivers should examine the tread. [AAA Arizona](#) recommends checking tire tread by placing a quarter upside down in the tread grooves on several spots on the tire. If the top of Washington’s head is exposed at any point, it’s time to replace that tire. Blowouts can cause serious traffic accidents. Tire tread along Arizona highways also greatly contributes to roadway debris, creating a safety hazard for other motorists.

“While summer is beautiful, enjoyable and exciting, litter along our roadways is ugly, unhealthy, and unsafe,” said MAG Chair Marie Lopez Rogers, mayor of Avondale. “By planning ahead, motorists can help keep families safe, while reducing the 1.6 million pounds of litter that must be removed from Valley freeways each year.”

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.

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