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CONTACT: Kelly Taft  
Communications Manager  
(602) 452-5020  
Or Veronica Graves  
Olson Communications  
(480) 368-7999

## Top Littered Item Causing Immediate Danger to Communities *Don't Trash Arizona Advocates for Proper Disposal of Cigarette Butts for Safety*

PHOENIX (June 5, 2013) — Cigarette butts may be small, but they can create big problems. According to the National Fire Prevention Agency, [about 90,000 fires](#) are caused annually in the United States by cigarettes. Cigarette-induced fires cost hundreds of lives and millions of dollars in property damage every year. They pose hazards to the environment not only due to wildfire danger but also because the toxic chemicals in littered cigarettes can seep into our water supply and pose health threats. The Maricopa Association of Governments' (MAG) anti-littering campaign, [Don't Trash Arizona](#), reminds motorists of the dangers of littered cigarette butts during Arizona's dry summer season.

"It's become so commonplace for people to toss their cigarette butts on the ground that people often don't think of it as litter," said Avondale Mayor and MAG Chair Marie Lopez Rogers. "What they don't think of is the immense danger their careless action poses to the surrounding community. Between polluting the water source, posing a threat to wildlife that eat them, and starting large-scale fires, cigarette butt litter can cause serious harm, even in a matter of seconds."

Despite declining numbers of smokers each year, cigarette butts remain the number one [most littered item](#) nationwide. Locally, as Maricopa County embarks on the driest time of the year, summertime means it is more important than ever for Valley residents to remember to dispose of cigarettes properly. Dry shrubs, grass and even other litter along the highway are incredibly susceptible to catching fire. Motorists should consider these easy options for properly discarding cigarette while on the road:

- Older vehicles have ashtrays built into the car, offering a simple solution to properly extinguish a cigarette until a trash receptacle is available.
- Although most new cars are not equipped with ashtrays, many general retailers sell portable, inexpensive ashtrays that fit in a car's cup holder.
- For an even more affordable option, empty soda cans can be reused as a temporary disposal solution.

*Don't Trash Arizona* reminds Valley drivers that cigarette butts are ugly, unhealthy and unsafe when disposed of improperly. For more information to encourage drivers to keep this and other trash off of our roadways, visit [www.DontTrashArizona.com](http://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.

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