

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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

Monsoon Storms Sweep Litter and Dangerous Debris Across Valley Freeways
***Don't Trash Arizona* Anti-Litter Campaign Reminds Motorists of Litter Impacts to Environment and Safety**

PHOENIX (August 01, 2012) — From monsoon rainstorms to desert haboobs, the summer months signify the onset of Arizona's storm season. The seasonal rainfall and sweeping winds add to the litter across the Valley's freeways and can even leave unhealthy impacts to residents and the environment, according to the [Maricopa Association of Governments](http://www.azmag.gov) (MAG), the organization behind the "*No Cups, Cans or Butts – Don't Trash Arizona*" initiative.

Chemicals found in dyes, plastics and cigarette butts that litter the Valley's regional freeway system can leach into our water supply after a monsoon storm, which pose environmental and health risks. Filters in cigarette butts can take years to decompose and are extremely difficult for litter crews to remove, which means this litter accumulates over long periods of time. [Don't Trash Arizona](http://www.donttrasharizona.com) urges smokers to keep an ashtray or recycled soda can in vehicles where they can dispose of cigarettes, reducing the amount of litter on freeways and limiting the impact those chemicals have on the environment.

Not only is this litter unhealthy, during a monsoon or haboob the winds can turn highway litter into airborne projectiles, limiting visibility and even damaging vehicles. Approximately 151,000 bags of litter are picked up from Valley freeways each year, which equates to 1.6 million pounds of trash. During a storm, loose trash scatters across the roadways, and in some instances, causes accidents.

Unsecured loads on trucks can also cause traffic accidents. According to the [AAA Foundation for Traffic Safety](http://www.aaa.com), debris that falls from or blows off of vehicles on freeways causes 25,000 accidents in the U.S. annually. When the monsoon winds increase, additional stress on tie downs can loosen loads not securely fastened or covered. *Don't Trash Arizona* advises drivers to secure loads with ropes, bungee cords or tarps to ensure other drivers will not be harmed by flying or loose debris on the freeway.

"Monsoon season is here, and we need to keep our highways safe during and after a storm blows in," said Avondale Mayor and MAG Chair Marie Lopez Rogers. "It is important to keep in mind the impact that litter has on roadway safety as well as on our environment. We all can prevent these issues by planning ahead. Easy things like keeping litter bags and ashtrays in our vehicles and securing large loads can really make a difference," she said.

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. Visit www.DontTrashArizona.com.

###