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## ***Don't Trash Arizona Offers Tips for Staying Safe This Monsoon*** **Drivers reminded of the dangers of freeway litter and debris**

PHOENIX (August 9, 2013)—As the summer heat rises, Arizona's storm season follows in dramatic fashion, bringing heavy rain, vivid lightning and formidable dust storms. Although Arizona's monsoon storms can pose serious dangers on their own, litter and debris on the roadways can create hazardous situations that may have fatal implications. [Don't Trash Arizona](#), a joint effort between the Maricopa Association of Governments (MAG) and the Arizona Department of Transportation (ADOT), reminds Valley drivers of the hazards these torrential storms and haboobs can create.

[AAA Foundation for Traffic Safety](#) reports that debris falling or blowing off vehicles on freeways causes 25,000 accidents annually. When the monsoon winds increase, poorly tied-down loads can become unfastened or uncovered from the stress, scattering debris across the roadways. The high winds can even turn that litter into airborne projectiles, limiting visibility and damaging vehicles.

Litter unintentionally created by motorists accounts for only 19 percent of the total amount of litter found, with 81 percent of roadway debris being intentional, according to research conducted by [Keep America Beautiful](#).

"It is never a good idea to throw trash on our roadways, but especially during this time of year, when high winds can carry it into travel lanes and create even greater hazards," said Mesa Mayor and MAG Chair Scott Smith. "Taxpayers spend \$3 million every year to pick up more than 1 million pounds of trash from Valley freeways. As drivers and passengers, we have a responsibility to our environment and to the health and safety of our fellow motorists to refrain from littering and secure our loads."

To help motorists avoid being the cause of significant traffic delays or devastating accidents, *Don't Trash Arizona* and ADOT offers some [tips for staying safe](#) on the roads during the monsoon:

- **Cover It Up.** For loose, lighter items such as couch cushions, appliances and patio chairs, drivers should use a sturdy plastic or canvas tarp or netting to keep items in place.
- **Don't Overload.** Keep materials level with the truck bed or trailer unless tied down, netted or covered with a tarp.
- **Pull Aside, Stay Alive.** A dust storm can reduce visibility. In these situations, drivers should check traffic around them, then [safely pull off the roadway](#). Drivers parked alongside the road should turn off all lights, including emergency flashers, and take their foot off of the brake pedal, setting the emergency brake. Also, drivers and passengers should remain in the vehicle with seat belts fastened while waiting for the dust storm to pass.
- **Stay up to Date:** For travel conditions, motorists can visit [www.AZ511.gov](http://www.AZ511.gov) or dial 511 from any landline or mobile phone anywhere in Arizona before hitting the road. However, drivers should never use a phone or other mobile device while driving.

*Don't Trash Arizona* offers more information on the hazards of unsecured loads on its website, [DontTrashArizona.com](http://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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