

PRO P **FACT** Sheet

Highway Cleanup & Recycling

Highway cleanup events bring many benefits to a community: aesthetically, environmentally, and even economically. But your hard work can make an even bigger difference if you do more than just pick the trash up and throw it away. Did you know that a good deal of that trash can actually be recycled?

Incorporating Recycling Into Your Cleanup

Separating recyclables from trash doesn't have to be a hard process. Here are some ideas to get you started:

- ♦ Divide your volunteers into two groups; one for trash, one for recyclable materials.
- ♦ Throw recyclable materials to the side of the road and pick them up later or have another group follow behind to pick them up.
- ♦ Bags of recyclables can be put out in normal curbside fashion, or dropped off at local recycling centers.



The fact is, highway cleanup is not just about aesthetics. Most of the materials that spoil our landscape are long-lasting in the environment, both as litter or landfilled waste. That's one reason why cleanup and recycling are both important.

A glass bottle takes about one million years to decompose, an aluminum can takes between 200-500 years. Plastics float in waterways, plugging streams and killing fish. Those plastic bottles will be around for about 70 years if left as litter but can back as a new bottle if recycled.

Here's a new game to play while traveling. "Count the bags hanging in the trees" will make your trip fly by and you will be sadly amazed at the number of plastic grocery-style bags you will spot in tree branches. These bags take 10-20 years to decompose. Please recycle plastic bags. Most local grocery stores have collection bins for easy disposal.



Quick Facts:

- ♦ PennDOT spends more than \$10 million in its efforts to keep highways clean every year.
- ♦ Each year, a quarter of a million people volunteer to pick up garbage along the roadways. Why not give that effort an extra boost by making sure materials that can be recycled are.

Safety Tips

It should go without saying that safety when cleaning up roadside garbage is of primary concern.

- ♦ Wear a brightly colored vest that passing motorists can see.
- ♦ Wear jeans, long sleeves, boots and gloves.
- ♦ Always walk facing the traffic flow.
- ♦ Do not pick up hazardous materials such as batteries, dead animals and syringes. If you are ever in doubt as to whether something may be hazardous, call your nearest office of the Department of Environmental Protection.
- ♦ Bottles and jugs that have a large volume of liquid in them can simply go in the trash. Recycling centers are equipped to deal with small amounts of liquid in bottles and jugs.
- ♦ Call 888-LITTERBUG to report community litter problems.



Cleanup & Reporting Programs

There are many cleanup initiatives to get involved with, including PennDOT's Adopt-A-Highway, Sponsor-A-Highway and Adopt & Beautify programs. The Great American and Great Pennsylvania cleanups are also good ways to make a difference, along with Keep Pennsylvania Beautiful cleanup and beautification programs. You can find out more about these programs at:

- ♦ www.proprecycles.org - The Professional Recyclers of PA
- ♦ www.keppabeautiful.org - Keep PA Beautiful
- ♦ www.kab.org - Keep America Beautiful
- ♦ www.pacleanways.org - PA CleanWays
- ♦ www.litterbutt.org - The Litter Reporting Website

This fact sheet was developed by the Professional Recyclers of Pennsylvania, P.O. Box 25, Bellwood, PA, 16617. For more information, please visit our website, www.proprecycles.org, or contact us by email at prop@proprecycles.org. We do our part to close the recycling loop and print all our publications on recycled paper.

Revised July 2008