

# LITTER IN AMERICA

Results from the nation's largest litter study



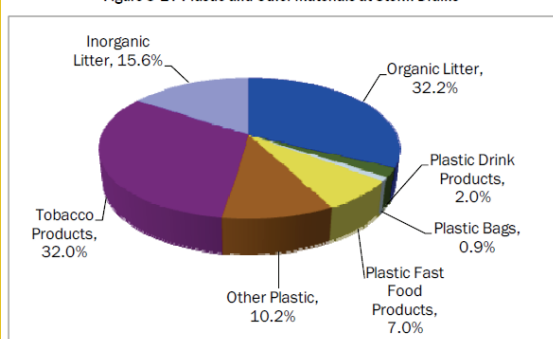
## KEY FINDINGS: LITTERING NEAR BUSY PEDESTRIAN CENTERS

Keep America Beautiful's 2009 National Visible Litter Survey and Litter Cost Study\* identified specific off-road locations where litter is most prevalent. Areas in and around transportation hubs, downtown business districts, and parks and other green spaces where individuals shop, eat, smoke, and congregate all attract and accumulate litter.

### LARGE AND SMALL ITEMS LITTER PARKS, BEACHES, AND OTHER RECREATIONAL AREAS.

- Litter in recreation areas is evenly split between items over 4 inches and smaller items. Most litter over 4 inches is food-related, including packaging and organic items.
- Most litter in recreation areas less than 4 inches is cigarette butts. Tobacco litter represents 31.5% and confection, such as candy and gum, is 18.5%. Paper (15.7%) and plastic (12.7%) also make up a large share of litter in parks, beaches, and outdoor recreation areas.
- The overwhelming majority of litter in recreational areas—98.5%—is attributable to pedestrians. This is largely because many parks, playgrounds, and community outdoor areas are not accessible to vehicles.
- Recreational sites that are well landscaped and near residential areas tend to have less litter. Landscaping, however, can be a good “hide out” for cigarette butts and other littered items, which are placed there intentionally or blown into greenery.

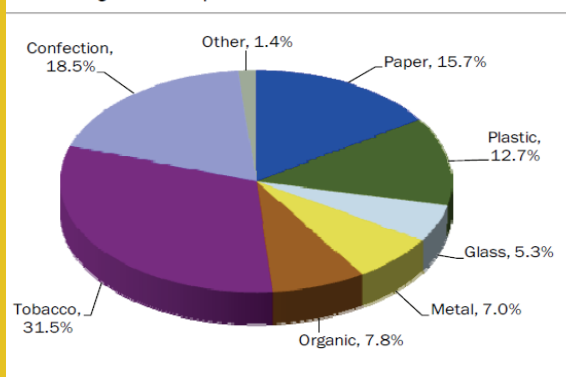
Figure 3-27 Plastic and Other Materials at Storm Drains



### MOST OFF-ROADWAY LITTER IS IMPROPERLY DISCARDED AT “TRANSITION POINTS”.

- Transition points have more than twice as much visible litter as other off-roadway location. These are areas where individuals consuming a food or tobacco product are required to discard the product before proceeding.
- Pedestrians are the source of 95.8% of litter at transition points. Motorists are a small fraction at 3.3%.
- Virtually all litter at transition areas—97%—consists of items less than 4 inches. Most is cigarette butts and confection litter, such as candy, chocolate, and gum.
- 53.7% of litter at transition points is confection litter. This is followed by cigarette butts at nearly 30%. Confection litter tends to accumulate because it can be difficult and expensive to clean up.

Figure 3-32 Composition of Litter at Recreational Areas



**MORE ON REVERSE SIDE...**



\* The 2009 National Visible Litter Survey and Litter Cost Study was prepared by MidAtlantic Solid Waste Consultants for Keep America Beautiful, Inc. Research reports and an executive summary can be downloaded at [www.kab.org/research09](http://www.kab.org/research09). Keep America Beautiful, Inc. 2009 national litter and littering behavior research were conducted through a grant from Philip Morris USA, an Altria Company. Wm. Wrigley Jr. Company Foundation sponsored the creation of these fact sheets. All contents Copyright 2010 Keep America Beautiful, Inc. – [www.kab.org](http://www.kab.org). January 2010

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## STORM DRAINS ARE A TRAP FOR LITTER THAT COLLECTS FROM STREETS AND SIDEWALKS.

- **After transition points, storm drains attract the most litter in a non-roadway setting.** These are located primarily in gutters and designed to drain excess rain from paved streets, parking lots, etc. Cigarette butts, confection, plastic, and other types of litter all tend to collect in or around storm drains.
- **Pedestrians and motorists are largely responsible for storm drain litter.** Storm drains can be equally accessible to pedestrians and motorists, but pedestrians are responsible for 59% of this litter, and motorists 32%. Unsecured loads account for 5.3%.
- **83% of litter near storm drains consists of smaller items under 4 inches.** These include predominantly cigarette butts and confection litter.
- **Most litter—32%—at storm drains is tobacco products.** Plastic is the next largest component at 20.1%, followed by confection 16.1%, paper 15.9%, glass 8.6%, metal 4.2%, and other littered items 3.1%.
- **Plastic items account for four of the most commonly littered items at storm drains.** This includes plastic fast food service items, plastic drink products, plastic bags, and other types of plastic.
- **Litter near storm drains, especially plastics, can contaminate waterways.** Because storm drains lead to waterways, litter can pose a potential hazard to marine life should these materials end up in our nation's water system.

