

RETHINK BUTTS:



A TOOLKIT TO HELP RAISE AWARENESS ABOUT THE ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT OF CIGARETTES

Cigarette butts are one of the last ‘acceptable’ forms of littering in our increasingly green-conscious society. According to environmental cleanup reports, nearly 2 million cigarettes or cigarette filters/butts were picked up internationally from beaches and inland waterways as part of the annual International Coastal Cleanup in 2010. This number includes more than one million from the United States alone, making it the No. 1 littered item found on beaches and waterways.

Even under ideal conditions, cigarette butts could take years to decompose, where they merely break up into small particles of plastic waste. Legacy has created this toolkit and a set of Public Service Announcements (PSAs) in conjunction with the Leave No Trace Center for Outdoor Ethics to raise awareness about the negative impact cigarette filters and discarded cigarette butts have on the environment. Please feel free to pull these materials and use them in collaboration with existing outreach efforts, post them on your website, distribute them through social media channels or share them with your viewership. Please help expand our efforts to educate Americans on this important topic.

JUST THE FACTS

Below is a short list of statistics that you can use to help raise awareness about this issue. For additional statistics and other information visit RethinkButts.org.

1. Cigarette butts are the most common type of litter

- According to environmental cleanup reports, nearly 2 million cigarettes and cigarette filters/butts were picked up internationally from beaches and inland waterways as part of the annual International Coastal Cleanup in 2010. This number includes more than one million from the United States alone.
- Cigarette filters/butts are the No. 1 littered item found on beaches and waterways.
- Cigarette butt waste is the last socially acceptable form of littering in what has become an increasingly health and environmentally conscious world.
- The remnants of cigarette smoking are the most common litter items collected across the world.
- According to research conducted by Legacy in 2012, more than half of the Americans surveyed reported not knowing that cigarette butts are the number one littered item every year on U.S. roadways and beaches. More than one million cigarettes and filters were collected from U.S. beaches and waterways alone in 2010.
- Tobacco litter clean-up is a substantial cost to cities each year.

2. Cigarette butts are not biodegradable

- Tobacco industry research reveals that there may be misconceptions among smokers that cigarette filters are readily biodegradable or inconsequential as litter. However, filters are made

of a plastic called cellulose acetate which is technically biodegradable under ‘ideal’ conditions, but in practice does not biodegrade when tossed on the street or on a beach. Even under ideal conditions, cigarette filters can take years to breakdown, merely breaking up into small particles of toxic waste.

- Cigarette butts trap residues from smoking including arsenic, cadmium and toluene.

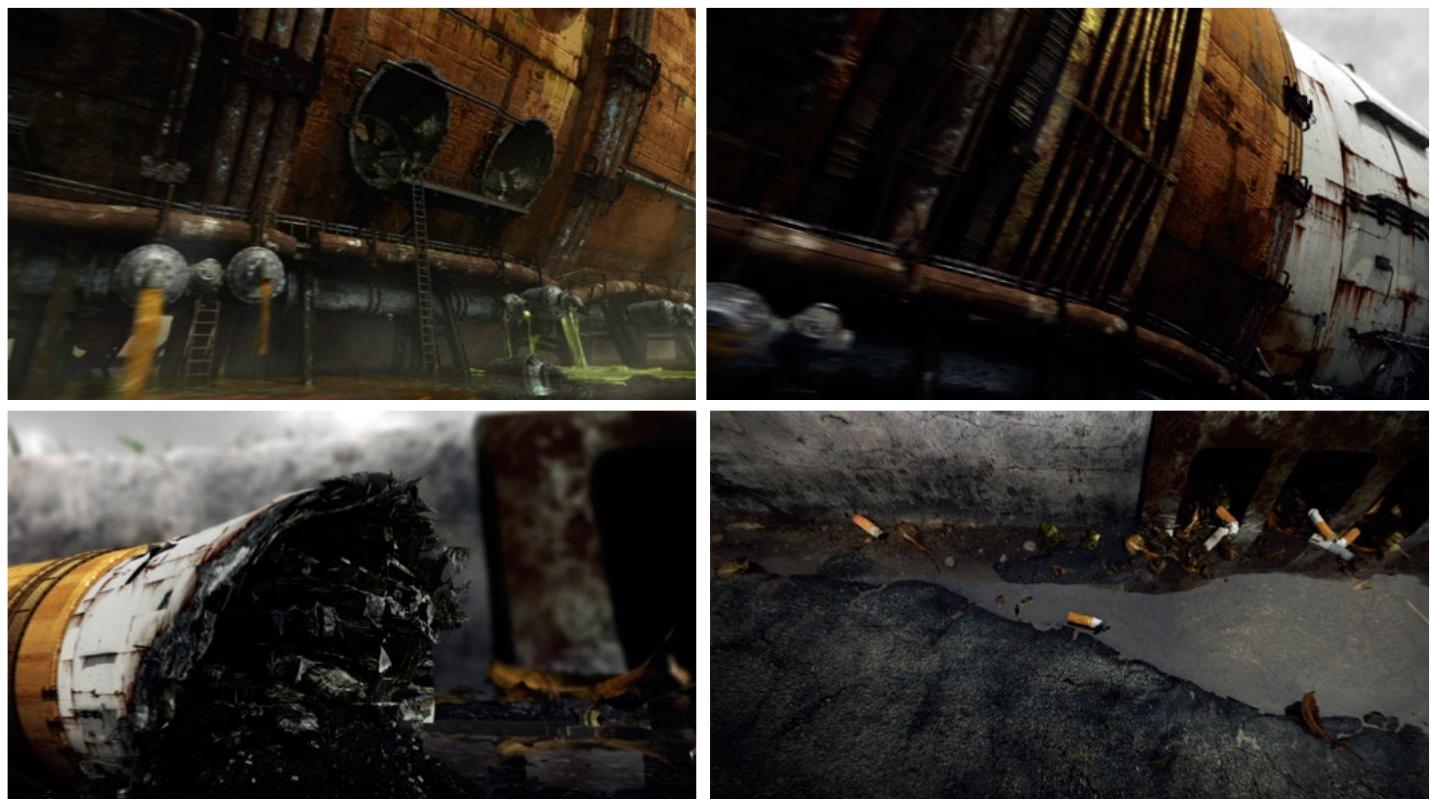
3. Cigarette butts are toxic to people and animals

- Poison centers have reported hundreds of cases of cigarette butt consumption among children under the age of 6 years old, with some cases of moderate toxicity due to nicotine poisoning.
- One cigarette butt soaked in a liter of water under controlled laboratory conditions was lethal to half the fish exposed. Cigarette butts were toxic to both fresh and saltwater test fish.

PSAs

Legacy is partnering with the Leave No Trace Center for Outdoor Ethics ([Int.org](#)) to raise awareness about the negative impact cigarette filters and discarded cigarette butts have on the environment. Together the organizations hope to encourage the general public to think about this issue in a new way while also serving as a resource.

A new set of PSAs will launch on April 1, 2013, in advance of Earth Day. Help start the discussion about this form of toxic litter by downloading and sharing the PSA content via social media and the web during Earth Month in April and throughout the year.



Littered cigarette butts are more than just an eye sore; they actually leach toxic waste into the environment. Air, download and share this message via social media, e-newsletters and emails. Together we can help everyone rethink butts and put an end to this form of toxic litter.

The PSAs are also available for download/share on the Legacy Facebook (facebook.com/legacy) page. Follow Legacy on Twitter ([@LegacyforHealth](https://twitter.com/LegacyforHealth)) for content related to this issue throughout the year.

NEWSLETTER COPY

Please post information about the Rethink Butts campaign in your own newsletters. Encourage your membership or audience to visit RethinkButts.org to learn more about the issue and how to take action.

Sample Newsletter Copy 1:

While most people know that exposure to tobacco smoke is life-threatening, many do not realize that the dangers from smoking don't end once a cigarette is extinguished. According to research conducted by Legacy in 2012, more than half of the Americans surveyed did not know that cigarette butts are the No. 1 littered item on U.S. roadways and the No. 1 item found on beaches and waterways worldwide. On Earth Day, April 22nd, more than a billion people in 180 countries around the world will commit to promoting environmental action. Littered cigarette butts are more than just an eye sore; there is a growing body of research documenting the impact that this tobacco litter has on the environment. Specifically, research findings published in a special supplement of the journal, *Tobacco Control* on April 19, 2011, provide evidence of the destructive impact that cigarette butts have on the environment and its ecosystems.

Cigarette butts have become the last socially acceptable form of littering in the increasingly health and environmentally conscious world. Help stop toxic litter by planning a cigarette butt clean-up, sharing information and/or public service announcements via social media, and emailing environment@legacyforhealth.org with your story. Visit RethinkButts.org to learn more.

Sample Newsletter Copy 2:

While it's likely many Americans know about the health concerns related to smoking, in a recent survey, more than half of the Americans polled didn't know that cigarette butts are the most littered item in the nation. Littered cigarette butts are more than just an eye sore. This toxic tobacco trash is mostly made of plastic and only biodegrades under ideal conditions, putting wildlife in danger and wreaking havoc on U.S. waterways, parks, beaches and roadways. Additionally, cigarette butts contain toxic chemicals that can leach into soil, and chemicals that are poisonous to wildlife and could contaminate water sources. They are very costly to local communities in terms of clean up and disposal.

Cigarette butts have become the last socially acceptable form of littering in the increasingly health and environmentally conscious world. Help stop toxic litter by planning a cigarette

butt clean-up, and sharing information and public service announcements via social media. Together we can build longer, healthier lives by educating more people about the destructive impact that cigarette butts have on the environment and its ecosystems. Visit RethinkButts.org to learn more.

DOWNLOADABLE FACT SHEETS

Download related facts and incorporate them into your own efforts.

- Tobacco and Environment Fact Sheet: legacyforhealth.org/3497.aspx
- Smoking Cessation: legacyforhealth.org/3483.aspx
- Adults and Smoking: legacyforhealth.org/3481.aspx
- Youth and Smoking: legacyforhealth.org/2467.aspx

TWITTER AND FACEBOOK STATUS LIBRARY

Follow [@LegacyForHealth](https://twitter.com/LegacyForHealth) on Twitter and re-tweet key messages related to the initiative. Throughout the campaign, posts will be tagged as #rethinkbutts.

Become a fan of Legacy's Facebook page at: facebook.com/legacy and share our posts about the environmental impact of smoking on your Facebook Page.

Use these sample messages as idea starters for your own posts on Facebook and Twitter:

Sample Tweets:

- Cigarette butts are toxic waste happening right where we live, work and play. Stop **#toxic #litter**. Learn more at RethinkButts.org.
- Don't think there's toxic waste in your neighborhood? If there are **#cigarettebutts**, think again. Stop **#toxic #litter**. Learn more at RethinkButts.org.
- Of almost 2 million **#cigarettebutts** picked up by [@OurOcean](https://twitter.com/OurOcean) in 2010, more than 1 million were from the US. It's time to clean up our act. **#RethinkButts @LegacyForHealth @leavenotrace**.
- Fact: Most **#littered** cigarette filters don't biodegrade. **#RethinkButts & #litter** this **#EarthDay** with [@LegacyForHealth @leavenotrace](https://twitter.com/LegacyForHealth).
- Fact: **#cigarettebutts** are the No. 1 most littered item on US roadways and waterways. This **#EarthDay, #loveyourmother** with [@LegacyForHealth @leavenotrace](https://twitter.com/LegacyForHealth).
- This **#EarthDay, @LegacyForHealth** is teaming with [@leavenotrace](https://twitter.com/leavenotrace) to help you **#RethinkButts**. Visit RethinkButts.org to learn more.
- Fact: Toxins from cigarette butts are lethal to fish and other organisms. Let's **#RethinkButts** this **#EarthDay** with [@LegacyForHealth @leavenotrace](https://twitter.com/LegacyForHealth).
- **@LegacyForHealth** survey shows more than 91% of people agree dropping a **#cigarette** is **#littering**. Stop toxic trash: RethinkButts.org

Sample Facebook Status Updates:

- Each year, people in the U.S. smoke more than 290 billion cigarettes. Ever wondered where

those cigarette butts go? At the International Coastal Cleanup in 2010, nearly 2 million butts were picked up from beaches and inland waterways worldwide, including more than 1 million in the U.S. alone. Butts end up right where we live, work and play. Everywhere. Legacy and Leave No Trace want you to Rethink Butts this Earth Day. (Link to Rethink Butts TV PSA available on facebook.com/legacy)

- It's likely many Americans know about the health concerns related to smoking, but in a recent survey, more than half of the Americans polled didn't know that cigarette butts are the most littered item in the nation. Littered cigarette butts are more than just an eye sore. Visit RethinkButts.org to learn more.
- Be conscious of the impact of cigarette butt litter on our environment this Earth Day. Visit RethinkButts.org to learn more.
- This Earth Day, Legacy and Leave No Trace encourage you to think about the impact that cigarette butt litter has on our environment. Let's stop toxic trash. Visit RethinkButts.org to make this Earth Day count.
- This Earth Day, Legacy and Leave No Trace are teaming up to spread awareness about the impact that cigarette butts have on our environment. Want to make a difference? Visit RethinkButts.org to learn more.

IDEAS

Use these idea starter to help raise awareness about the environmental impact of cigarettes.

Organize an Earth Day community butt cleanup. Consider working with local environmental or public health groups who are already involved in litter clean up. Use social networks like Meetup, posting boards or other local venues to get people together to take action.

Put it on the web. Use your Web site to provide more information, including contact information for local resources and links to RethinkButts.org

Carry a small plastic bag with you when you're in the outdoors to pick up butts and other micro trash that you encounter.

Learn the Leave No Trace Seven Principles including Dispose of Waste Properly to learn about how to mitigate the impacts of litter and waste in the outdoors. (Information available at Int.org)