Organizing a Litter Cleanup Campaign in Your Community

Cleanup Organizing Tips
We hope you will consider organizing a litter cleanup in your neighborhood, near your business or as close to your neighborhood or business as possible. Cleanups can be of any size. Following these guidelines and getting support from your town or city will insure that your group will have a half-day of fun and rewarding work that will benefit the community and the natural environment.

Plan Ahead:

- Find a littered area you would like to clean up. Assess safety of site. If needed, obtain permission from private landowners.
- Set meeting time, date, and location. Plan a rain date.
- Recruit a core group of friends to volunteer, and then use posters and word-of-mouth to bring in more people.
- Register your cleanup with your town or city by going to your local government and making sure they know what you are doing and when – and coordinate with local law enforcement. Also, make sure whatever company collects trash in your community is available to haul away whatever you pick up so you'll need to coordinate that as well.
- You may also wish to purchase inexpensive trash bags and latex/latex-free gloves from a Home Depot or another supply store.

Day of Cleanup:

- Bring water, snacks, a phone, sunscreen, shirts, bags, grabbers, safety checklist, and a first aid kit.
- Welcome and thank volunteers and orient them to the area to be cleaned. Using the sign-in/ liability waiver sheet enhances safety awareness. Review the safety checklist with your volunteers.
- Do your cleanup. If you bag recyclables separately (a nice thing to do!), put them out with your regular curbside pickup.
- Gather for a snack and sharing of discoveries. Take a GROUP PHOTO for your company website and newsletters!
Cleanup Safety Checklist

- Designate a safety officer whose only responsibility is safety and trouble-shooting. This person should have a first aid kit, a cell phone, and a list of emergency phone numbers.
- Review this safety checklist with volunteers before they get to work.
- Ask volunteers to sign the liability release/sign-in sheet – this is probably the best way to direct their attention to the need to follow safety rules.
- Supervise children closely
- Dress properly; wear heavy shoes and long pants, gloves, use sun screen and insect repellent when appropriate.
- Drink plenty of fluids, avoid over-exertion, get help with large objects, do not pick up anything dangerous.
- Do not overstuff bags or pickup anything that could be hazardous to your health.
- Do not rough-house or otherwise distract motorists
- When near a road, wear orange vests, work in groups, face on-coming traffic.
- Wash hands after the cleanup.
- Check yourself for ticks.
- Be aware of poison ivy (and other allergic reactions)

Tip: Use the paragraph below at the top of a sign-in sheet on the day of your cleanup accomplishes three things: 1) it helps raise safety awareness in a timely way, 2) it collects vital contact info you can use next time around -- and 3) it helps prevent lawsuits. By the way, few cleanup leaders actually use this tool and nobody we know has ever been sued by a volunteer.
Cleanup Liability Release and Sign-In

The undersigned, recognizing and assuming all risks of accident and injury, hereby agrees that the following sponsors: Keep [name of your town] Beautiful, _____________________________ will not be liable or legally responsible for any injury sustained by the participant, or for loss or damage to property owned or in the possession of the participant during, or as a result of, participation in the cleanup project at ___________________________ (location) on _________________________ (date) whether such injury or property damage is caused by the negligence of the sponsors or their respective employees, officers, agents, or otherwise.

Name (print)                  Mailing Address             Telephone & E-Mail

(you add extra lines to fill out the page below this header...)

Notes on Litter from Keep [name of your community] Beautiful

Why is litter bad? Litter is ugly, it pollutes the environment, it reduces property values and tourism, it invites more litter and worse crime, and it is expensive to clean up. Litter is demoralizing – it shows a corrosive lack of respect for the land and community.

Why do people litter? There are three basic reasons, according to the national litter prevention organization Keep America Beautiful: 1) they feel no sense of ownership over public space; 2) they believe somebody will pick-up after them; and/or 3) they see accumulated litter already in place.

Where and how do people litter? Drivers and pedestrians litter deliberately, but other primary sources of litter are: uncovered, overfilled trash and recycling containers and improper bulk put outs; messy commercial dumpsters and loading docks; untidy construction sites; uncovered truck loads; illegal dumping. Wind, water and animals then move litter until it snags on roadside bushes, invades previously clean properties, and clogs storm drains and culverts.
How do we stop litter? There are three basic approaches to litter prevention: 1) organized cleanups; 2) public education; and 3) enforcement of litter and property maintenance laws. Public policy plays a role, such as Connecticut’s Returnable Container Act (bottle deposit law).

Why do we do cleanups? Cleanups have a direct positive impact on the environment and the community, helping to reduce pollution, deters future littering, increase environmental awareness, and builds pride in community. Seeing litter return to cleaned areas is frustrating, so remember: judge your success by the positive example you set, not just the amount of litter you remove.

What is Keep [name of your town] Beautiful doing to reduce litter?

We are a small, nonprofit, membership organization concerned with litter prevention and beautification in [name of your town], affiliated with Keep America Beautiful. Please join us!

Cleanups: Providing clearinghouse services to local cleanup groups involved with Great American Cleanup and Great River Sweep. Support for Adopt-a-Highway Program. Raising money to buy t-shirts for volunteers.

Education: School programs; letters to the editor; radio, newspaper and television PR for Great American Cleanup; presentations to civic organizations; parades; advocacy.

Enforcement: Working to boost police enforcement of litter laws and citizen reporting of litter problems.

Beautification: Public art such as trash can painting.