
MDOT SHA Litter and Mowing FAQ

What is litter?

Litter comes in many forms, including cigarette butts, fast food wrappers and cups, discarded food, liquor cans and bottles, general refuse and illegal dumping of tires and bulk items.

How much does it cost taxpayers to remove ugly litter from the roadsides?

The Maryland Department of Transportation State Highway Administration (MDOT SHA) expends nearly \$9.5 million each year picking up litter. This equates into about 5,600 truckloads of trash annually. MDOT SHA spent more than \$47 million over the last five years collecting more than 27,000 truckloads of litter found along state roads and appropriately disposing of it.

What is Operation Clean Sweep Maryland?

Operation Clean Sweep Maryland is statewide litter removal effort on State roads throughout Maryland. Although state maintenance crews remove litter regularly as part of routine maintenance duties, the State Highway Administration is taking advantage of the seasonably warm winter weather this year and beginning significant litter removal efforts early, before the mowing season (April-October).

How are corridors chosen?

MDOT SHA road corridors that have a high average traffic volume are chosen first, but the effort includes ALL MDOT SHA roadsides.

How does litter impact MDOT SHA operations and highway users?

Litter is not only ugly, but it can also be dangerous to highway users, including drivers, bicyclists, and pedestrians. Hidden litter, such as metal debris and bottles can be struck by mowing crews, creating potentially dangerous projectiles. Litter can also spill onto the pavement surface posing a hazard to motorists and creating the possibility of damaging vehicles.

Litter also significantly impacts the way rainwater or snow melt is conveyed to drainage structures. Clogged storm drain inlets and underground pipes that are blocked by litter or nearly blocked can cause water to overflow from the drains and cause ponding on the roads, creating a hazard and during winter, dangerous ice to form.

Where does litter end up?

Litter that makes it past MDOT SHA drainage systems will end up affecting the Chesapeake Bay watersheds, and ultimately the Chesapeake Bay. This has a detrimental impact on the overall health of the State's treasure, the Chesapeake Bay. Litter ultimately will end up in our oceans. [Who collects litter on Maryland highways and roadsides?](#)

MDOT SHA's maintenance shop crews and contractors collect most of the litter. MDOT SHA's districts work with local authorities to utilize inmate crews if available.

How can I help?

First and foremost, MDOT SHA urges people to throw trash where it belongs, in a trash can. Make sure loads are properly secured and covered.

Small businesses and other MDOT SHA approved organizations may participate in our Adopt- A-Highway program and volunteer to help clean up local roadways. For more information about this program, visit https://bit.ly/mdotsha_adoptahighway.

The traveling public is MDOT SHA's best eyes on the ground. If you see litter, we strongly encourage citizens to submit a service request form at

https://marylandsha.secure.force.com/customercare/request_for_service .

Citizens call also call 1-800-323-6742.

Litter crews work directly adjacent to traffic. As Operation Clean Sweep Maryland gets underway, motorists should pay close attention and reduce speeds and distractions when traveling near work crews. Move over whenever possible when you see crews working on the shoulders and help make sure everyone makes it home safely.

Operation Clean Sweep Maryland supports the Maryland Department of Transportation's "Be a Superhero! Put litter in its Place" campaign, which offers people of all ages educational materials to learn about the devastating effects litter has on Maryland's economic development, tourism, and quality of life.