

Celebrate Earth Week by trashing the trash!

This Earth Week, we are challenging industry partners to host a litter pickup event at their facilities. You can limit the event to your own property or expand it to an adjacent field or riverbank.



Why does this matter?

Litter can be washed away by stormwater and into our waterways, eventually spilling out into marine environments. Along the way, litter can entangle and be eaten by aquatic life, some of which carries through the food web to our plates¹. Cleaning litter from the ground, such as in your facility's parking lots and storage areas, is the easiest way to prevent escaped trash from making it to the oceans.

As an added benefit, cleaning litter from your property demonstrates to employees that maintaining clean grounds is important. It's respectful of the local community, it can increase a sense of community pride and wellbeing and it can even encourage a reduction in wasteful behavior by helping participants recognize the scope of pollution².

Reducing litter in the environment, even in relatively small amounts, helps prevent harm to wildlife and further beautifies America's landscape.

Consider the following tips to help organize this event and reduce escaped trash:

- Encourage participation – treat everyone to something nice at the end of the event or sponsor a prize for whoever collects the most litter.
- Treat safety as a priority – identify hazards ahead of time, such as inclement weather, active roadways, steep slopes, waterways, etc. Discuss hazards with participants and bring PPE to reduce risk.
- Continuously improve – put trash cans where you consistently see litter problems. A big cause of litter is simply a lack of available trash cans³.
- Track the data – record litter found and report it. EPA uses the Escaped Trash Assessment Protocol (ETAP)⁴ and NOAA uses the Marine Debris Tracker app⁵.
- Bring the event home – invite local media to attend and challenge other area businesses to participate.
- Make it a tradition – host annual Earth Week litter cleanup events.
- Ultimately, dispose of litter responsibly – recycle recyclables, trash the trash.

Visit the following links for additional information:

¹ www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC6132564

² www.unep.org/news-and-stories/story/picking-litter-pointless-exercise-or-powerful-tool-battle-beat-plastic

³ journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.1177/0013916511412179

⁴ www.epa.gov/trash-free-waters/epas-escaped-trash-assessment-protocol-etap

⁵ marinedebris.noaa.gov/partnerships/marine-debris-tracker

kab.org/programs/great-american-cleanup/event/

www.epa.gov/trash-free-waters

www.epa.gov/trash-free-waters/more-information-about-aquatic-trash

