



Frequently Asked Questions

Litter Survey and Sort

Q: *How is litter defined?*

A: Litter is any waste that is not disposed of properly. The definition includes large and small items discarded by accidental or deliberate acts, and illegal dumpsites.

Q: *Why is Ecology conducting a litter survey?*

A: Washington's Legislature passed the Waste Reduction, Recycling and Litter Control Act in 1998. It requires Ecology to conduct a litter survey that will provide baseline information against which to measure progress in litter reduction. The last litter survey was conducted in 1990.

Q: *What is the goal of the litter survey?*

A: The goal of the litter survey is to gain information about litter composition, litter generation rates, and about littering behavior. This information will help Washington reach its zero litter goal, and help Ecology coordinate cleanup efforts and develop better overall litter prevention and control programs.

Q: *How is the litter survey being conducted?*

A: Litter samples are being collected to gain information about litter composition and generation. Focus groups and a telephone survey are being used to learn peoples' perceptions of littering behavior and prevention strategies.

Q: *Who is conducting the litter survey?*

A: Ecology contracted with Cascadia Consulting Group of Seattle to design the sampling plan, develop a methodology, implement the focus groups and telephone survey, perform the statistical analysis, and prepare a final report. A professional litter-sorting firm, Sky Valley Associates, was hired to conduct the actual sorting activities. Ecology Youth Corps, with assistance from Department of Corrections, Department of Natural Resources and local community litter crews are collecting litter samples for the study. Crews visit survey sites to delineate, map and measure sampling areas. The crews initially clean survey sites, then revisit them to collect the litter that has accumulated. The process will be repeated in the fall.

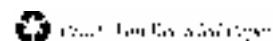
Q: *Where are litter samples being collected?*

A: The litter was collected from 182 litter survey sites across the state. These sites were

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randomly selected from the following categories: interstates, state routes, county roads, highway interchanges, highway rest areas, state recreation areas, and state and county parks. Litter survey samples were collected in the spring and will be collected again in the fall to examine potential seasonal differences. To date, 4,979 bags (approximately 75,000 pounds) of litter have been collected as part of the litter survey.

Q: What is being done at the litter sort?

A: Each litter sample is being sorted into eight general material categories: paper, plastic, glass, metal, organic, construction related, hazardous and other. Then the materials will be sorted into subcategories. Each subcategory is then weighed and the data are recorded for future analysis.

Q: What other litter cleanup work is happening?

A: In addition to litter survey work, Ecology Youth Corps is also completing its routine road cleanup, collecting over 2500 bags in March and April alone. Crews will continue to work through the fall.

For more information, contact Megan Warfield, Washington Department of Ecology, (360) 407-6397.

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