

## *Frequently Asked Questions*

### **1. What is *Litter. It Costs You*?**

*Litter. It Costs You* is Georgia's statewide anti-litter initiative, a comprehensive and unified fight against litter. Led by Governor Sonny Perdue, state agencies, local governments and volunteer organizations have joined together in a coordinated statewide program of education, eradication and enforcement. The campaign uses a new interactive Web site ([litteritcostsyu.org](http://litteritcostsyu.org)), an online community toolkit, community challenges for adults and youth, a mascot program, and public awareness activities to reach its audiences.

### **2. Will there be an education component of the campaign geared specifically toward Georgia's children?**

Children are often the best motivators for change. They are also fast learners. Lesson plans, games and activities are all available at [litteritcostsyu.org](http://litteritcostsyu.org). In addition, a Youth Clean Community Challenge will be introduced to engage the next generation. The campaign mascot, "the Brown Trasher," will be available for community appearances.

### **3. What is the definition of litter?**

According to Georgia's anti-litter law (House Bill 1320) passed in the 2006 legislative session, the definition of litter is ANY discarded material. That includes paper, cigarette butts, fast food packaging, illegal signs, abandoned cars, old tires, furniture, appliances and any other items that are not disposed of properly. Litter also includes highway debris from unsecured loads.

### **4. What are the primary sources of litter?**

According to Keep America Beautiful, litter most likely comes from one of the following places:

- Pedestrians or cyclists who do not use receptacles.
- Motorists who do not use car ashtrays or litterbags.
- Business dumpsters that are improperly covered.
- Loading docks and commercial or recreational marinas with inadequate waste receptacles.
- Construction and demolition sites without tarps and receptacles to contain debris and waste.
- Trucks with unsecured and uncovered loads on local roads and highways.
- Household trash scattered before or during collection.

### **5. Why do people litter?**

According to a statewide survey conducted in Spring 2006, the number one *perceived* reason why Georgia residents litter is that people are lazy (59 percent

answered "lazy"). Survey respondents who admitted to littering cited some of the following reasons for their actions:

- No trash receptacle (18 percent)
- The litter was biodegradable (16 percent)
- It was an accident (seven percent)
- Too busy (four percent)

#### **6. How does litter affect the lives of Georgians?**

**Economics** - Georgia's \$16.2 billion dollar tourism industry suffers when visitors see our roadsides littered with garbage. In addition, the state spends millions of dollars every year to clean up the roadways.

**Environmental Impact** - Litter hurts the environment, affecting our wildlife and water quality. Eighteen percent of all littered items end up in our streams and waterways as pollution.

**Public Safety** - Litter on our highways is everything from an annoying distraction to a dangerous obstacle, many times causing traffic accidents and tie-ups. Across the country, approximately 25,000 motor vehicle accidents and up to 90 fatalities every year are the result of unsecured loads or vehicle-related debris.

**Quality-of-Life** - Litter affects and reflects how we feel about our state. When asked about litter, 87 percent of Georgia residents agree that litter affects their quality of life, according to a May 2006 statewide survey.

#### **7. What can the average person do to be productive in the fight against litter?**

Please see the Take Action! tip sheet for a list of things people can do to help make a difference.

#### **8. Are there any penalties for littering?**

Anyone caught littering (less than 10 pounds of litter) in Georgia can be charged with a misdemeanor and, if found guilty, may be directed to clean up the littered area. His/her name may also be published. If the offender littered more than 10 pounds of litter, but less than 500, he/she can be charged with a misdemeanor of a high and aggravated nature. The court will publish a notice of conviction.

Anyone convicted of illegally dumping more than 500 pounds is guilty of a misdemeanor of a high and aggravated nature on the first offense. A second conviction is a felony. The penalty for a second conviction is a fine of up to \$25,000, a prison sentence of up to five years, or both.

#### **9. What is currently being done to help fight litter?**

In March 2006, the Georgia General Assembly passed a new litter law (HB 1320) known as the "Comprehensive Litter Prevention and Abatement Act of 2006." This Act consolidated the state's litter laws into one place, bringing together more than two dozen different code sections that dealt with litter. Below are some of the details of the new law:

- Improves the ability of law enforcement to punish litter offenses, clarifies complicated statutes related to litter and stresses personal responsibility as an overarching principle.
- Broadens the definition of litter to include all types of materials.
- Holds the driver responsible for litter leaving a vehicle.
- Creates a new definition for 'egregious litter' – large quantities or particularly nasty litter.
- Increases the accountability for drivers of egregious littering violations.

The Georgia Department of Transportation spends about \$14 million each year to handle routine litter pick-ups on state highways and interstates. This is money and time that could be better spent on other, more needed services.

Keep Georgia Beautiful and 67 local affiliates work with staff and volunteers to educate the public and engage them in clean-up activities such as the Great American Cleanup. This annual, nationwide community improvement campaign occurs in April. In 2005, more than 38,000 Georgians volunteered their time (more than 145,000 hours) and collected more than 4.5 million pounds of trash from their communities!

More than 400 organizations are currently active in Georgia's Adopt-A-Highway program. These groups pick up trash on about 550 miles of Georgia's highways and interstates.

**10. Where can I get more information about *Litter. It Costs You* and the state's anti-litter initiative?**

Please visit the Web site at [litteritcostsyou.org](http://litteritcostsyou.org).