

# *Austin guide to...* **CIGARETTE BUTTS**

With Austin's ban on smoking in many public places such as office buildings, restaurants and bars, an increasing number of cigarette butts are being tossed on the ground and out of car windows. The Texas Department of Transportation estimates that 130 million butts a year are tossed out on our highways alone.



## *A Few Facts ...*

- **Cigarette Butts Are Litter** – people who would never toss an aluminum can on the street, do toss cigarette butts believing they are small and biodegradable and therefore not litter
- **Cigarette Filters Are Not Biodegradable** – a popular misconception is that filters are made of cotton, but they are actually made of cellulose acetate, a form of plastic that can take years to degrade
- **Discarded Butts Cause Fires** – cigarettes can cause brush fires as well as indoor fires – smoking-related fires contribute to 800 deaths per year in the U.S.
- **Butts Are Harmful to Our Water** – the purpose of a cigarette filter is to reduce the toxins inhaled by the smoker which means that those chemicals are concentrated in the remnants of the cigarette. Since butts are light, they are often carried by rainwater to our waterways, adding pollutants to Austin's creeks



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- **Filters are Toxic** – both children and fish can mistake them for food
- **Clean Up is Costly** – like all litter, someone has to clean it up or it becomes unsightly

### *What Can Be Done?*

- **Use an ashtray to dispose of butts and a garbage can to dispose of matches, lighters and cigarette packaging**
- **Keep your butts in the car** – ashtrays are convenient there
- **Carry a pocket or portable ashtray when outdoors**
- **Provide ashtrays where people frequently gather to smoke**
- **Tell your friends to prevent litter and fires!**

### *Resources*

- **Keep America Beautiful,**  
[www.preventcigarettelitter.org](http://www.preventcigarettelitter.org)
- **National Fire Prevention Association,**  
[www.nfpa.org](http://www.nfpa.org)

