

Spring Is Here: Watch For Litter Removal And Think Before You Throw!

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SPRINGFIELD – Spring is here, the weather is getting warmer and the Illinois Department of Transportation is reminding the public to be on the lookout for maintenance teams picking up litter throughout the state. As part of its ongoing *Think Before You Throw!* initiative, IDOT is stepping up efforts to remove litter from roadsides while encouraging you to be part of the solution.

“Litter might seem like a temporary problem, but it can have long-term, far-reaching impacts,” said Illinois Transportation Secretary Omer Osman. “During the pandemic, we have observed much more littering taking place. We are committed to helping maintain a positive impression of Illinois by keeping roadsides clean, but we can’t do it alone. We’re asking you to think before you throw and properly dispose of trash.”

The *Think Before You Throw!* campaign aims to reduce roadside litter by raising awareness of its impacts.

Litter is more than just an eyesore – it has real, negative consequences for the environment and communities, while unnecessarily costing taxpayers millions of dollars a year. In 2021, IDOT spent approximately \$41.3 million statewide on picking up litter, sweeping shoulders and removing large debris. That’s the equivalent of resurfacing 21 miles of four lanes of interstate or purchasing 261 new maintenance trucks that also plow snow in winter.

Across Illinois, IDOT forces have resumed and expanded litter removal operations, which will continue throughout the spring and summer. If you encounter maintenance vehicles and workers, please slow down, move over, and give them space – it’s the law.

To view a short video on the impacts of litter in Illinois, click [here](#) or visit IDOT’s [YouTube](#) channel.

Other litter facts:

- Roadside litter causes distractions that can lead to dangerous crashes. It also requires maintenance operations that put workers in potentially hazardous situations.
- Littering is illegal and subject to a fine of up to \$1,500 in Illinois. In addition to other penalties, violators may be required to maintain litter control over a portion of highway for 30 days.
- Litter kills plants and animals.
- Litter is unsightly. No one likes litter in their community.
- Littering is a problem that’s easily controlled and preventable. Use a trash can instead.
- Remember: Think before you throw!

Last year, IDOT’s *Adopt-A-Highway* program resumed normal operations after they were temporarily suspended due to COVID-19. Volunteers logged 766 hours while participating in 1,317 cleanup activities. Almost 1,600 bags of garbage were collected, with a VCR, car parts, and an assortment of old gym shoes among the items collected and properly disposed.

To learn more about how to become a volunteer, visit the Adopt-A-Highway [page](#) to fill out an online application and “adopt” a two-mile section of highway.