



State of Illinois  
JB Pritzker, Governor



Illinois Department of Transportation  
Omer Osman, Secretary

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:  
April 3, 2023

CONTACT:  
Maria Castaneda 312.447.1919  
Paul Wappel 217.685.0082

## Litter campaign by IDOT urges public: Think Before You Throw!

*Effort seeks to address problem that cost public \$26.5 million in 2022*

**SPRINGFIELD** – The Illinois Department of Transportation is once again asking the public to be on the alert for crews picking up litter and to *Think Before You Throw!* As part of an ongoing awareness campaign, IDOT is mobilizing litter pickup operations this spring and encouraging you to be part of the solution in keeping roadsides and communities free of unnecessary trash and debris.

“As one of the largest landowners in the state, the Illinois Department of Transportation takes great pride in making sure we are keeping our state as clean and free of clutter as possible, but we need your help,” **said Illinois Transportation Secretary Omer Osman.** “Excess garbage on highways can be easily avoided. Dispose of garbage properly. Make sure loads are properly secured and covered to keep debris and other trash from winding up on the roads. Litter has consequences: Think before you throw!”

The *Think Before You Throw!* initiative aims to reduce roadside litter by raising awareness of its impacts to help keep a positive impression of the Prairie State for those who reside here and the nearly 100 million tourists who visit annually.

Illinois is home to 150,000 miles of road. You can do your part to keep them clean by using bags and receptacles in your vehicle to collect and dispose of trash. Also consider reusable bags for shopping and refillable bottles for beverages to cut down on waste. Ensure trashcans have lids that attach snugly to stop garbage from being spread. Properly secure and cover loads as well with a tarp, rope, straps, and netting.

Last year, IDOT spent approximately \$26.5 million picking up litter and removing large debris. That’s the equivalent of buying 143 maintenance trucks that also plow snow in winter or purchasing all of the salt IDOT spread during the past snow-and-ice season, with \$1 million left to spare. It also could pay to resurface 13 miles of interstate.

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

With the arrival of spring, IDOT forces are engaged in litter removal operations across the state, which will continue until next winter. If you encounter maintenance vehicles and workers, please slow down, move over and give them space – it's the law.

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.
- Litter kills plants and animals. And it is unsightly. No one likes litter in their community.
- 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. ([415 ILCS 105/5](#))
- Loads must be tarped and secured, with permits required for certain cargo. Violators can face penalties that include a fine up to \$250 in Illinois. ([625 ILCS 5/15-109](#))
- Littering is a problem that's easily controlled and preventable. Use a trash can instead.
- Remember: *Think Before You Throw!*

For hazardous wastes, take advantage of [special collection events](#) offered by the Illinois EPA.

The Adopt-A-Highway program aims to offset these impacts by asking community groups and organizations to help with litter removal on designated state routes. Last year, volunteers logged 750 hours while collecting more than 1,700 bags of trash. Included in the items were televisions, toys and one hand-written note apologizing for eating the last of a box of Twinkies.

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.

###