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SUPERVISORS TANG & FEWER ANNOUNCE PILOT PROGRAM TO REDUCE CIGARETTE BUTT LITTER ON SIDEWALKS AND IN SEWER SYSTEM

Supervisors Tang and Fewer announce installation of 40 cigarette butt ashcans along Sunset and Richmond District commercial corridors and Ocean Beach as part of 6-month pilot program

Today Supervisors Katy Tang and Sandra Lee Fewer announced an innovative pilot program to curb the number of cigarette butts that are tossed onto sidewalks and roadways and that eventually end up in our sewer system and coastal waters. The pilot is a result of both District Supervisors working with the Surfrider Foundation with support from San Francisco Public Works. Forty cigarette butt cans will be installed along Ocean Beach and on commercial corridors in the Sunset and Richmond Districts. For six months, these cans will be emptied by Public Works. The Surfrider Foundation Butt Brigade's ["Hold on to Your Butt"](#) campaign will conduct periodic cigarette butt counts in the pilot areas to determine the effectiveness of the program. Supervisors Tang and Fewer announced the cigarette butt ashcan pilot this morning at Ocean Beach Stairwell 17 and were joined by the Surfrider Foundation and volunteers, Public Works, SF Environment, and community members.

The pilot began on June 30, 2017 and will last six months. Twenty cigarette butt ashcans will be deployed in high cigarette litter areas in each neighborhood. In the Sunset, they will be installed on Irving Street between 19th – 25th Avenues, on Noriega Street between 19th – 25th Avenues and 28th – 33rd Avenues, and along the Ocean Beach Promenade from Noriega to Rivera Streets. In the Richmond, they will be installed on Geary Boulevard from Arguello Boulevard to 7th Avenue as well as from 18th Avenue to 22nd Avenue, and on Ocean Beach in the parking lot from JFK Drive to Stairwell 18. The collection cans will be supplemented with business and smoker education about toxic butts as well as the providing of free pocket ashtrays for smokers to use when they are not near a collection can. The SF Surfrider Butt Brigade will coordinate cleanups and cigarette butt counts in each area before the pilot, during the mid-point of the pilot, and at the end of the pilot to see if the ashcans and education have decreased the number of cigarette butts in the areas where butt cans are installed.

"San Francisco is an environmental leader, yet for some reason we have not tackled the problem of cigarette butts in an effective way," said Supervisor Katy Tang. "We are surrounded on three sides by the very water that we are polluting. The Sunset and Richmond Districts, which are adjacent to Ocean Beach, should lead the way to encourage everyone to recognize that we should all be stewards of the environment and the water even when we are not at the beach."

"Ashcan installations in the Richmond began as a community-based effort to address cigarette-litter," said Supervisor Sandra Lee Fewer. "This pilot complements cleanup efforts initiated by residents; this is what happens when a community comes together. In the Richmond, we take care of the Richmond. This also recognizes this is everyone's personal responsibility to keep the environment clean by properly disposing of cigarette butts."

Cigarette butts and tobacco-related products are the number one most littered item in San Francisco. Cigarette butts are made of plastic, are toxic, and are easily swept from the streets and sidewalks into the sewer system or directly into ocean water where they pollute our environment.



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The San Francisco Controllers Office and the Department of the Environment initiated a litter study conducted in 2009 and [again in 2014](#) to determine the proportion of tobacco-related litter to non-tobacco-related litter on our streets and sidewalks. While there was an overall decrease of 68% in the total amount of litter observed in 2014 compared to 2009, the proportion of tobacco-related litter to non-tobacco-related litter increased. In 2009, there were 2,638 pieces of cigarette litter which comprised 25% of all litter collected, while in 2014 there were 2,064 pieces of cigarette litter which comprised 53% of all litter collected.

“This pilot project is a great example of an innovative, community-driven response to litter and pollution prevention,” said Debbie Raphael, Director of the San Francisco Department of Environment. “Whether it’s surfers who see the impacts of cigarette butts on Ocean Beach or our local merchants who want cleaner sidewalks, when we come together to solve problems, our environment and our neighborhoods benefit.”

In a 2017 [report](#) on preventing cigarette litter in San Francisco conducted by the [San Francisco Chapter of the Surfrider Foundation](#), cigarette butt cleanups of two hours or less reported more than 4,200 butts collected at Ocean Beach and Noriega Street, 4,615 butts collected on 19th Avenue from Lincoln Way to Taraval Street, and 6,000 butts collected along Balboa Street.

“Flicking cigarettes is a common habit and many people think cigarette filters are biodegradable,” said Shelly Ericksen, volunteer with the Surfrider Foundation San Francisco. “In fact, cigarette filters are made of tiny strands of cellulose acetate—the same plastic as your sunglasses. They are loaded with toxic chemicals including arsenic, lead and cadmium, poisoning children and animals that mistake them for food. When those chemicals leach into our oceans and groundwater, they threaten the safety of the fish we eat, and the water we drink.”

While there are manual cigarette butt and beach cleanups, litter laws, and even a [cigarette abatement fee ordinance](#) which earns for the City of San Francisco \$0.60 per pack of cigarettes, cigarette butt litter persists. SF Public Works has a community corridor program, which is funded by the cigarette abatement fee, where corridor ambassadors service commercial areas removing litter, graffiti, broken sidewalks, and other problems that blight neighborhoods. During the 6-month butt can pilot, SFPW corridor ambassadors will also service the 40 butt cans in the Richmond and Sunset Districts.

"Cigarette butts blight our neighborhoods, harm wildlife and are labor-intensive for our crews and volunteers to pick up," said Public Works Director Mohammed Nuru. "We're hopeful this butt can pilot will yield positive results and get smokers to stop using our sidewalks and streets as ashtrays."

If the cigarette butt can pilot is deemed successful and results in a significant decrease of cigarette butt litter, the program could be expanded with the support of Public Works and the community corridor program.

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