

BEING A GOOD NEIGHBOR:

# A Guide to Reducing and Managing Litter



**KEEP AMERICA  
BEAUTIFUL**

*Prepared in partnership with the Foodservice Packaging Institute,  
Keep America Beautiful, Inc. and the National Restaurant Association, 2015*

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# Restaurateurs have a long and proud history of being good neighbors.

Part of that history involves proper management of waste, including preventing and reducing litter in and around restaurant and foodservice establishments.

Litter can be a huge challenge, carrying a cost for businesses and the environment. The Foodservice Packaging Institute, Keep America Beautiful and the National Restaurant Association recognize that foodservice packaging is one part of the litter stream, and we're pleased to partner on this guide to help foodservice operators prevent and reduce litter. The goal is to improve your customers' experience, help the environment, and enhance your bottom line. We hope these quick and easy tips make it possible for you to make a difference.



## About the Foodservice Packaging Institute

Established in 1933, the Foodservice Packaging Institute is the trade association for the foodservice packaging industry in North America. FPI's members include raw material and machinery suppliers, packaging converters, foodservice distributors, operators and retailers. Learn more at [fpi.org](http://fpi.org).



## About Keep America Beautiful

Keep America Beautiful inspires and educates people to take action to improve and beautify their community environment. With its national network of community-based affiliates and partners, KAB works with millions of volunteers who take action in their communities to transform public spaces into beautiful places. Through programs and public-private partnerships, individuals are engaged to help make their community cleaner, greener and a more beautiful place to live. Learn more at [kab.org](http://kab.org).



## About the National Restaurant Association

Founded in 1919, the National Restaurant Association is the leading business association for the restaurant industry, which is composed of 1 million restaurant and foodservice outlets and a workforce of 14 million employees. The NRA represents the industry in Washington, D.C., and advocates on its behalf. For more information, visit [Restaurant.org](http://Restaurant.org). Learn about restaurant sustainability with NRA's Conserve program: [Restaurant.org/Conserve](http://Restaurant.org/Conserve).

# Foodservice Packaging and Litter: The Basics

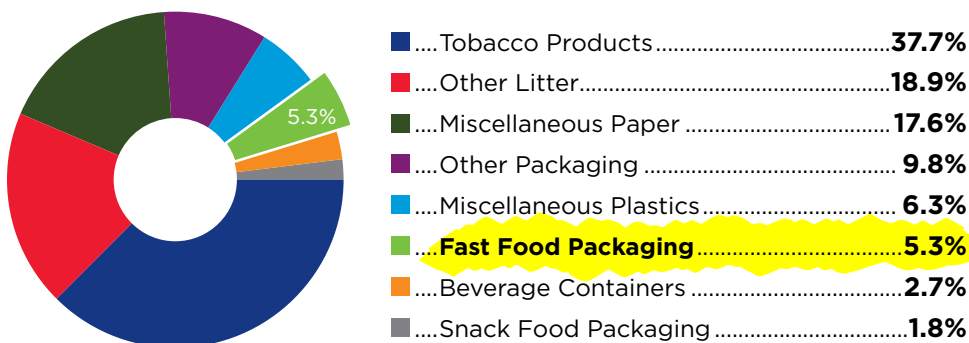
Foodservice packaging is part of the litter stream. It comes in all shapes and sizes — single-use cups, containers, wraps, boxes, bags, lids, cutlery, straws, stirrers and more — and is made from a variety of materials, including paper, plastic and aluminum.

Foodservice packaging allows restaurant operators to serve guests in a sanitary, convenient and economical manner. But it's not a benefit to the environment when it ends up as litter. Litter or trash of any kind can have harmful effects on roads and waterways, with consequences for the economy and public health.

So how much do restaurants contribute to the litter stream? Keep America Beautiful reports that fast-food packaging — the largest component of all foodservice packaging — represents approximately 5 percent of all litter in the United States. However, it also accounts for roughly 19 percent of items in the “visible” litter stream, defined as items that measure more than 4 inches.

The most frequently observed items of foodservice litter include food wrappers, containers, beverage cans, napkins and paper products such as straw wrappers, according to a 2009 Keep America Beautiful study conducted by Action Research. The Ocean Conservancy also lists some food-service packaging among the top 10 items found in its beach clean-ups.

## TOTAL LITTER (2009)



Source: Keep America Beautiful, [National Visible Litter Survey and Litter Cost Study](#), 2009



## Most frequently littered items

	Cigarette butts
	Food remnants
	Food wrappers
	Food containers
	Beverage containers (cans)
	Napkins
	Paper, including straw wrappers

Source: Keep America Beautiful, Litter Research, 2015

## Top 10 Items Collected

	Cigarette Butts <b>2,248,065</b>
	Food Wrappers (Candy, chips, etc.) <b>1,376,133</b>
	Beverage Bottles (Plastic) <b>988,965</b>
	Bottle Caps (Plastic) <b>811,871</b>
	Straws, Stirrers <b>519,911</b>
	Other Plastic Bags <b>489,968</b>
	Grocery Bags (Plastic) <b>485,204</b>
	Beverage Bottles (Glass) <b>396,121</b>
	Beverage Cans <b>382,608</b>
	Cups & Plates (Plastic) <b>376,479</b>

Source: Ocean Conservancy International Coastal Cleanup, 2015

You can't manage what you don't measure, so take some time to figure out what items are being littered in and around your facility. Download this handy check list to help you.

# LITTER OBSERVATION AND TALLY

Use this audit form to better understand what types of litter are prevalent in and around your facility, and where it's been found. This can help tailor your anti-litter message to your customers.

*Instructions: Place a tick mark in the appropriate column and then tally them up.*

Type of Litter	Inside Your Store	TOTAL	Outside Your Store	TOTAL
Bags				
Bottle Caps				
Bottles				
Candy / Gum Wrappers				
Cans				
Condiment Packaging				
Cups / Lids				
Food Containers / Wraps				
Napkins				
Plates / Platters / Bowls				
Straw or Utensil Wrappers				
Straws / Stirrers				
Tray Liners				
Utensils (Forks, Knives, Spoons)				
Food Scraps				
Receipts				
Cigarette Butts / Cigar Tips				
Tobacco Packaging / Wrappers				
Clothing / Shoes / Shirts				
Diapers				
Personal Hygiene Products				
Tissues				
Other				

Source: Keep America Beautiful Litter Observation Tool



# What Leads to Littering

While self-reported littering rates have declined in the past 40 years, individual littering — and litter — persists.

According to its 2009 “Littering Behavior in America” report, Keep America Beautiful researchers observed the vast majority of people properly disposing of trash in receptacles. But nearly one in five disposals — 17 percent — ended up as litter. Most of this was done intentionally, such as by dropping the litter (54 percent) or flicking/flinging the item (20 percent).

About 85 percent of littering is the result of people’s attitudes, according to the research. Changing individual behaviors is the key to preventing litter — and environmental cues can make a difference. People who see litter are more likely to litter, for example. KAB research shows about 15 percent of littering is affected by the presence of existing litter.

The location of trash receptacles also makes a difference. Where people were observed littering in public spaces, the nearest trash receptacles averaged about 29 feet away, according to the research. The rate decreased to 12 percent when people were within about 10 feet of a trash receptacle. This echoes research by Walt Disney Co., which studied customers at entertainment parks and shopping areas and found that trash receptacles must be placed at intervals of about 30 steps to ensure proper disposal.



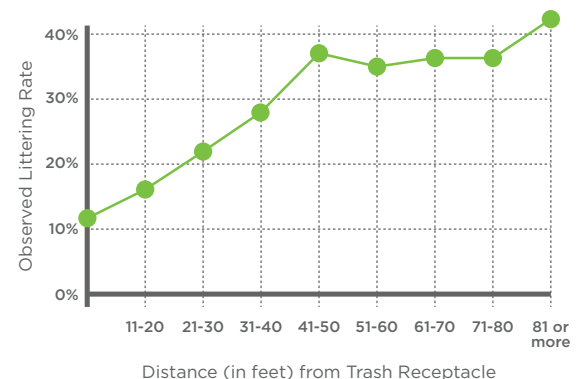
## Change the environment to reduce littering

*Use these four tips to ensure customers avoid littering:*

- 1. Make proper disposal convenient and accessible.** Provide sufficient trash, ash, and recycling receptacles inside and outside your establishment.
- 2. Ensure consistent and ongoing clean-up.** Littered environments attract more litter, so keep your foodservice establishment clean and litter-free.
- 3. Use landscaping and maintenance to promote a sense of personal responsibility.** Making an effort to “beautify” your establishment results in lower rates of littering behavior.
- 4. Make the most of motivational messaging.** Encourage customers to properly dispose of litter through direct engagement or on-package messaging.

## Observed Littering Rate by Distance to Receptacle

Source: Keep America Beautiful, National Visible Litter Survey and Litter Cost Study, 2009



## CASE STUDY

**The Walt Disney Co.** determined through observation at its entertainment, parks and shopping areas that trash receptacles must be placed at about every 25-30 paces for proper disposal.



# Working with Guests and Employees to Manage Litter

What goes on inside a foodservice operation affects littering outside the establishment. You can encourage customers not to litter by where you place receptacles, the type of receptacles you use, the cleanliness and maintenance of your grounds, and direct messages to customers.

**1. Start with your employees.** How your employees behave and interact with customers can help set the right tone. Employees who are trained in litter-prevention best practices and asked to demonstrate these practices develop a sense of ownership and responsibility. Consider the following ways to get employees involved.

- **Include litter education as part of employee training.** Talk to your employees about the economic and environmental impacts of litter. Help them understand that the presence of litter affects a brand's reputation and may even result in fines to the business.
- **Incorporate litter prevention into regular employee tasks.** This could include grounds maintenance, customer interactions, transferring trash to outside storage areas, and using trash and cigarette ash receptacles.
- **Ask for employees' input.** Employees are in the best position to identify day-to-day changes to help maintain a litter-free environment. You'll encourage a sense of ownership by asking them for input.

**2. Look at customer service.** Stop litter before it's even generated.

- **Look at how you distribute straws and condiments.** Use single dispensers for straws and consider eliminating paper straw covers when possible. If you provide straws and condiments in



takeout bags or on trays, train your employees to ask customers if they want them, and how many, rather than provide them automatically.

- **Question the need for receipts.** Many businesses are eliminating customer receipts or providing them only on request.
- **Think about napkin delivery.** A loose stack of napkins can encourage more napkin use and increase the potential for litter. Consider napkin

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“We look for new ways to **engage and educate our guests through promotional messages** in the restaurant and in the neighboring communities. We support litter prevention through messaging on our packaging, such as “Put Waste in its Place.” The majority of our restaurants also post a “Be a Good Neighbor, Don’t Litter” message at the exit of their drive-thrus.”

— Tim Hortons manager

dispensers that offer a single napkin at time, and make sure the dispenser is filled correctly. These dispensers can reduce waste by up to 25 percent. When placing napkins in takeout bags or on trays, consider having employees ask the customer how many they need, or simply provide one per customer.

### 3. Look at your trash receptacles.

Placing a sufficient number of trash, recycling and ash-tray receptacles in high-traffic areas is one of the best ways to help employees and customers eliminate litter.

“Make it easy for the customers to drop the right trash into the right bins. Sounds easier said than done, considering language barriers. But putting the right bucket in the right place is key.”

— Wolfgang Puck  
Worldwide  
manager

- **Determine the best type of receptacle for your establishment.** Most foodservice operators report using “open front/side (no flap)” or “front/side (push flap)” receptacles. If the trash receptacle

- **Identify the proper location and quantity.** Most operators place trash and recycling receptacles inside or just outside entrance/exit doors. Some restaurants also put receptacles in outdoor seating areas and parking lots. Identify high-traffic areas and places where litter tends to accumulate. Make sure you have enough receptacles, that they’re the right size, and that they’re located where they are most convenient for customers.

## Where the litter is in restaurants

Foodservice operators say this is where they find the litter — and which items are the most littered.

[Download the Foodservice Operator Checklist for Litter Control](#)

### INSIDE the restaurant:

- Condiment, counter and seating areas were the areas where foodservice operators reported the most litter, followed by areas around trash/recycling receptacles.
- Straws/straw packaging, napkins, and receipts were the most littered items.

### OUTSIDE the restaurant:

- Parking lots are the most common spots for litter, according to foodservice operators. Other trouble spots include around or near outdoor trash/recycling receptacles and on the streets/sidewalks around the establishment.
- Cigarette butts, beverage cups and lids, napkins and food wrappers were the most littered items outside the restaurant.

Source: FPI / KAB / NRA survey of foodservice operators, 2015

frequently has litter around it, that’s a sign it’s inconvenient for customers, not big enough or not being serviced adequately.

- **Service receptacles regularly.** Most foodservice establishments set a schedule for employees to regularly empty receptacles located inside and outside of the store. If you’re accumulating litter around your trash receptacles, take a look at your service schedule. Train your employees to pick up any trash outside the receptacle as they empty it, and to replace the trash liners.





“In White Castle’s New York and New Jersey locations, **personnel clean the restaurant property as well as the block around it** so the area nearby is well kept.”

— White Castle Management Co. manager

**4. Maintain your efforts.** Managing litter is an ongoing effort. Consider the following best practices.

- **Incorporate litter cleanup into your maintenance schedule.** Maintaining and emptying trash receptacles helps create an environment that discourages littering. Include litter pickup as part of maintaining your grounds, both inside and outside the establishment. Consider a daily inspection of trash receptacles to ensure they don’t overflow.
- **Ensure transfer to dumpsters is litter-free.** Most foodservice establishments use liners in their trash and recycling receptacles and then remove, tie and transfer these liners to the dumpster area for hauling. Some regulations even require bags inside dumpsters to be tied or closed. Ensure the bags are tied tightly. Train employees to pick up any trash that spills out. Make sure storage is adequate to properly contain the trash bags.
- **Confirm haulers do not create litter during the pickup process.** In your contracts with haulers, specify ways to reduce litter during the transfer from dumpster to truck. Monitor pickups to ensure any litter is cleaned up immediately.
- **Address border areas around property.** Research shows that areas that are clean and litter-free are more likely to stay that way. If there is persistent litter around the periphery or entry to your property, try to identify the source of the litter. Then work with a local business improvement district, Keep America Beautiful affiliate, property manager, neighborhood business group or similar organization to reduce the source.

**PREVENT  
LITTER AROUND  
DRIVE-THRU  
WINDOWS**

Drive-thru customers often pull in to a parking space to consume their meals. **Consider adding receptacles** in those areas — or in areas on the way out of the parking lot — so drivers can easily dispose of trash.



## Wolfgang Puck streamlines grab-and-go to reduce waste and litter

Wolfgang Puck Worldwide is working to find the most efficient way to serve grab-and-go products, so there is less trash and potentially less litter. The company trains employees to ask customers if they want bags or other commonly littered items, and to give customers only what they need.

**5. Use customer messaging.** Many foodservice operators put prevention or anti-littering messaging on their takeout packaging. Some ask people directly to make a commitment not to litter. Consider the following opportunities for consumer-facing messaging on litter prevention.

- **Ask employees to engage customers.** Train staff to use appropriate opportunities to ask customers to help reduce litter. For example, when providing takeout orders, employees can make customers aware that litter reduction is the reason for certain practices around dispensing condiments, napkins or straws.
- **Communicate your anti-litter message on takeout packaging.** Consider printed messaging on bags, napkins, tray liners and other packaging that asks customers not to litter. For example, White Castle places a “Do Not Litter” message on its paper carryout bags.
- **Use in-store signage.** Remind customers to use the proper receptacles. Signage is most effective in high-traffic service and seating areas as well as near or printed on receptacles.
- **Share messages on receptacles.** Display signage directly on trash and recycling receptacles or at eye level above or near receptacles to remind customers to properly dispose of items.

### Did you know?

Up to 25 percent of litter at foodservice properties is not generated by the establishment.

Source: FPI / KAB / NRA survey of foodservice operators, 2015

# FOODSERVICE OPERATOR CHECKLIST

## 1. INSIDE THE ESTABLISHMENT

- ☐ Are self-serve items (straws, napkins, utensils, condiment cups, etc.) in areas that are convenient? Are they in appropriate dispensers to encourage guests to take only what's needed?
- ☐ Are trash and recycling receptacles located at exits and other areas that help customers avoid littering?
- ☐ Do you provide a written schedule for employees to ensure frequent and regular maintenance of:
  - ☐ receptacles
  - ☐ self-serve counters
  - ☐ common seating areas
  - ☐ restrooms
  - ☐ floors
- ☐ Is there appropriate/sufficient signage or other messaging to encourage customers to clear tables and dispose properly of their remaining items?
- ☐ Are ash trays and receptacles conveniently located if smoking is permitted on the premises?

## 2. OUTSIDE AREAS: PARKING LOTS AND DRIVE-THRU AREAS

### *Receptacles:*

- ☐ Are there sufficient trash and recycling receptacles, considering the size of your premises, kind of traffic and volume of business?
- ☐ Are the receptacles you use the most effective, in terms of style, type and volume?
- ☐ Are receptacles placed where litter tends to accumulate? Take a good look at the end of the business day to evaluate.
- ☐ Do you need to add an ash receptacle?
- ☐ Do receptacles have closed tops or lids to prevent items from blowing out and becoming litter?

### *Maintenance:*

- ☐ Is the maintenance schedule based on usage or volume? Monitor to determine how frequently you need to collect to prevent overflowing dumpsters.
- ☐ Is there a written maintenance schedule? Receptacles may overflow during rush hours when team members are busiest elsewhere.

## 3. OUTSIDE AREAS: SERVICE/TRASH AREAS

### *Bulk refuse container system:*

- ☐ Does the dumpster/container have enough capacity to hold all refuse generated between collections?
- ☐ Do lids close tightly?
- ☐ Are overflows or spills cleaned up quickly?
- ☐ Are pickups scheduled to meet volume needs?
- ☐ When private trash haulers are used, does your contract specify use of covered trucks for collection?

### *Deliveries:*

- ☐ Are deliveries required to be stacked neatly in the loading area to prevent litter at the loading dock or back door?
- ☐ Are delivery-truck personnel encouraged to use trash/recycling receptacles?
- ☐ Do your employees compact shipping cartons and boxes and put them in recycling containers immediately?

## 4. GROUNDS MAINTENANCE

- ☐ Is trapped or accumulated litter removed wherever it occurs on the property?
- ☐ Are there frequent, regularly scheduled cleanups of the entire property?
- ☐ Are planted areas regularly maintained?
- ☐ Do you use messaging to encourage customers to clean their tables and properly dispose of trash and recyclables?
- ☐ Are outdoor tables cleaned after each table turn?
- ☐ Is the parking lot weed-free?
- ☐ Is the entire outdoor area well-lit with no dark corners to hide litter?

## 5. SIDEWALKS AND STREETS

- ☐ Is there a written schedule for frequent sidewalk and drainage/gutter cleaning?
- ☐ Is litter put into receptacles and not swept or pushed into gutters?
- ☐ Are additional receptacles installed on the sidewalk beyond the property line in all directions?
- ☐ Do you increase maintenance when construction or demolition occurs in the area?
- ☐ Are contractors encouraged to maintain a high level of cleanliness at their construction and demolition sites?

# Understanding Litter Laws

Most jurisdictions have codes in place to help businesses reduce litter. Identifying and understanding your community's code for litter and solid waste and partnering with local officials can help you develop an effective litter-control program.

Regulations related to litter and solid waste are usually found in fire, housing, building, health and public safety codes. Check with local officials or jurisdiction websites for information about applicable regulations.

- **Dumpster/bulk containers.** Some municipalities specify an optimal size for dumpsters (6 to 8 cubic yards, for example) and prohibit other sizes. Dumpsters and containers should be big enough to completely contain all solid waste.
- **Collection schedules.** What are the trash and recycling collection schedules? Are there any mandates related to food-waste collection? In your contracts with waste haulers, spell out procedures for weekends and holidays, when trash tends to accumulate more quickly.
- **Collection trucks and techniques.** Some codes require businesses to locate their dumpsters in an enclosed area. Carefully review the requirements for enclosed areas, including maintenance by the waste hauler and/or foodservice operator. Be aware of any procedures governing the transfer of waste from containers to collection trucks.
- **Sidewalk maintenance.** Most communities require property owners to keep the sidewalks in front of their establishments clean. Most prohibit sweeping refuse into the gutter or drainage facilities. Work with employees to ensure litter doesn't enter waterways through those areas.
- **Parking lot maintenance.** Many communities require foodservice operations to install a certain number of trash receptacles in parking lots, often based on the number of parking spaces. If you provide sufficient receptacles for disposal, you'll reduce both litter and parking-lot clean-up time.



## NEW LAWS TARGETING RESTAURANT LITTER

Government officials are taking action to reduce litter. Take for example Philadelphia: In 2015, its city council approved a plan requiring corner stores and restaurants to place trash and recycling bins within 10 feet of their entrances in an effort to reduce litter. The bill is modeled on the Walt Disney Co.'s determination that if trash cans are more than 25-30 steps apart, people will litter. Violators will face fines of up to \$100. (Source: [cbslocal.com](http://cbslocal.com))

# Partnering with Your Community

Foodservice operators can build the power of their brands by engaging with their communities to help prevent litter. In addition to keeping your own operation litter-free, consider these opportunities:

- **Participate in annual neighborhood clean-ups.** Partnering with a Keep America Beautiful affiliate during the “[Great American Cleanup](#)” held each spring or “[America Recycles Day](#)” (on November 15), or participate in a community or school initiative to create litter-prevention awareness.
- **Take part in year-round cleanup programs.** Ongoing engagement helps to expand your business’s involvement. Consider “Adopt-a-School,” “Adopt-a-Highway” or other “Adopt-a-Spot” programs sponsored by Keep America Beautiful affiliates or state and local groups.
- **Engage other businesses to participate in litter-prevention activities.** Recruit local businesses to join a litter-prevention or cleanup event.
- **Submit your best-practices program to local, state, and national awards programs.** Keep America Beautiful solicits nominations for its [national awards](#) program each September.



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## Tim Hortons engages with cleanups and awareness campaigns to help communities tackle litter

The Ontario-based Tim Hortons restaurant chain has taken a leadership role in community cleanup efforts. The chain supports more than 300 community cleanups across Canada each year. Nearly 2,000 of its restaurants participate annually in an anti-litter awareness program.

“The No. 1 reason White Castle addresses litter prevention is that our restaurants have been in their locations for more than 30, 40 or 50 years. **We are a part of the community.** We hire people from the neighborhoods who care about where they live and want their communities to be clean.”

— White Castle Management Co. manager