



KEEP  
PENNSYLVANIA  
*Beautiful*

# Guidelines for Illegal Dump Cleanups



*10 Steps to Organizing  
an Illegal Dump Cleanup*

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# Ten Steps to Organizing an Illegal Dump Cleanup



## Introduction

*Are you disgusted with the trash in your community – litter that lines roadways, waterways, or greenways and large piles of trash, tires, appliances, etc., illegally “dumped” in remote or isolated places? You do not need special skills or have to be an “organizer” or a great motivator to make a community cleanup happen. All you need is time, a good plan, and enthusiasm.*

*As each community is unique, it would be practically impossible to present a guide that covers every aspect of every cleanup. This booklet breaks down the process of organizing an illegal dump cleanup into ten steps, although some of these steps could be used for a simpler litter pick up. This “ten step process” will help ease the apprehension individuals and/or groups may have about tackling a much needed cleanup for the first time. A good plan will help set a direction, document the steps needed to organize a successful cleanup, and keep the area clean. Use this booklet as a guide to coordinate and safely complete an illegal dump cleanup.*

# STEP 1

## Survey the Site

*Visit the cleanup area to get an idea of the community support needed, including volunteers and supplies. Stay on the road's edge or on public property being careful not to trespass onto private property. A full site assessment of private property sites will happen later after having obtained permission to enter.*

*Be sure to note and document:*

- Amounts and types of trash, any situations that may need special tools/equipment or consultations, and specific safety concerns,*
- A rough estimate of the number of volunteers and cleanup days needed,*
- Names of neighboring businesses and addresses of nearby homeowners,*
- Clear directions to the site from a known point, noting landmarks, house numbers, which side of the roadway, and any other details that will help volunteers and others find the site.*

*Take photos for future reference and to show others the problem. Note 'before' photo vantage points and take 'after' photos from the same point, once the cleanup is completed, to highlight the improvement.*

# STEP 2

## Build Community Team

*In every community there are people and groups that value clean environments and will be more than willing to help and/or donate their support. Local businesses, utilities, and government agencies take pride in their communities and are valuable sources of support. Ask them to help with the volunteer cleanup. Use photos of the site to show them the problem. Be specific with requests and always accept what is offered graciously, even if it's not what was hoped. Every little bit helps .*

*Check with local government to see who maintains the area and meet with them to discuss concerns and ideas. If the road is state-maintained, work with PennDOT through their beautification program.*

*Choose a cleanup date, and an optional alternate rain date. Prime cleanup season is early spring, after snow melts but before vegetation emerges, or late fall after vegetation dies back and before snowfall. Find a date that will work for most volunteers, usually a Saturday. Factor holidays and other important dates such as the first day of fishing or hunting seasons. Choose a start and end time and consider that most volunteers will only work for ° the day. A 9:00 AM start with lunch at noon works well. Take into account that large sites may need more than one cleanup attempt.*

## STEP 3

# Obtain Permission to Enter

*It is critical that all impacted property owners be asked to sign a permission to enter form well in advance of the cleanup. (See sample on page 5.) Be willing to work with property owners. They may agree to allow an initial cleanup but may not be willing to grant additional or on-going access for maintenance cleanups. Personal contact is the most friendly and successful way to work with property owners. These contacts may even lead to their helping on the day of the cleanup.*

*Property owners names and addresses can be located at the local municipal or county tax office. Neighbors may also provide information, but do not rely solely on their information as fact. If you can't personally deliver, send the property owner(s) a letter along with the permission to enter form. Explain the cleanup objectives and detail the preliminary plans. It may be helpful to list the community support that has already been secured. Ask for their cooperation and permission to access the property. Allow plenty of time for a reply and follow up if necessary.*

*Respect the wishes of property owners who refuse entry and work around their properties. Ask them again if another cleanup is organized. They may have been leery of initial efforts and could reconsider after they have seen a successful cleanup. Remember that trespassing is illegal, so be aware that volunteers cannot enter any property without permission from the property owner. Even if just passing through a property and not removing trash, the property owner's permission is still needed.*

# Sample Permission to Enter

I, (Name) \_\_\_\_\_, being owner of a property situated at (Description of property location) \_\_\_\_\_ in (Municipality) \_\_\_\_\_ do hereby grant permission to (Group or Individual's name) \_\_\_\_\_ represented primarily by (Name of organizer) \_\_\_\_\_ and the volunteers recruited by this group and/or organizer for a cleanup on my property. By granting permission, I do, with intent to be legally bound, hereby release (Group's name) \_\_\_\_\_ and their volunteers from any liability and do not assume liability for actions incurred during the cleanup held on (Date) \_\_\_\_\_ with an alternate date on (Alternate date) \_\_\_\_\_.

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Signature of property owner)

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Date)

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Printed name of property owner)

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Signature of group representative)

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Date)

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Printed name of group representative)

(OPTIONAL) Also, I do hereby grant this group and recruited volunteers permission to enter my property henceforth to help maintain this property as a refuse-free property and to remove any trash as may be deemed necessary by them.

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Signature of property owner)

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Date)

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Printed name of property owner)

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Signature of group representative)

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Date)

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Printed name of group representative)

Keep Pennsylvania Beautiful developed this form as a general sample only.

Actual use of this form does not construe approval, ownership, endorsement, or sponsorship of any person or event for which this form may be used. Be aware that some of this sample has legal, financial, and/or other implications. If you are not sure about the use of any form, consult with an appropriate professional first.

# STEP 4

## Assess Site for Cleanup

*Make an appointment with the property owner(s)/maintainer, road department supervisor, local media, and other pertinent community team members and visit the site together. Walk through the entire site, examining all debris and site conditions thoroughly. Discuss options such as winching to remove large or difficult items; some utility trucks or off-road vehicles are equipped with a cable and winch mechanism for heavy pulling. Note safety concerns such as sharp curves, steep slopes, and narrow bridges and mutually set restrictions for volunteers. Volunteer safety is the primary concern and should be considered at all times.*

*Provide for the safety of the volunteers by asking the municipality to close the road to all but local traffic during the cleanup. Use “Work Crew or Litter Crew Ahead” signs if the road cannot be closed on the day of the cleanup. Identify parking areas and convey the location to the volunteers before the day of the cleanup.*

*Identify an easily accessible location for the roll-off box, or a staging area for the trash and tires that will be picked up and hauled later. Estimate the volume of trash using a full-size, 1-ton pickup truck bed as a guide. Calculate that approximately 3 tons of trash will fit in a 20-yard roll-off box and approximately 5 tons in a 30-yard box, depending on the type and density of the trash. Count the number of tires keeping in mind that roughly 25 regular car/light truck tires can be safely stacked into 1-ton pickup truck bed at one time.*

*Consider other safety support, depending on the difficulty of the cleanup or suspicious items. Refer to Step 6. Hazardous and Questionable Items. Check with the Solid Waste Specialist from the local Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) office. Ask local emergency personnel for their guidance and support.*

*Verify cell phone reception at the site and 911 availability.*

*It is common to find evidence of dumpers at an illegal dumpsite. Evidence tends to be in the form of mail or bills, magazines, medicine bottles, or pizza boxes that contain someone’s name. If evidence is found leave it alone, preferably undisturbed, and notify law enforcement personnel.*

# STEP 5

## Acquire Volunteers

*Local, grassroots community involvement builds a sense of ownership and stewardship and is critical to the long-term success of the cleanup. Volunteers can be recruited in numerous ways.*

- *Use nearby property owners' and neighbors' names and addresses from tax maps to notify them of the cleanup.*
- *Contact friends, associates, colleges, universities, high schools, churches, watershed groups, birding clubs, sportsmen's clubs, youth groups, scouts, Lions, Kiwanis, etc.*
- *Solicit the local media as key members of the community team before, during, and after the cleanup. Ask them to raise awareness of the problem and the need for volunteers through newspaper articles, television, and radio.*
- *Create flyers and utilize local newsletters and bulletin boards to publicize the cleanup.*

*Set the minimum age at 12 for easy-to-clean areas, adjusting higher for more difficult cleanups, with a ratio of one adult for every six children. Advise volunteers to wear sturdy shoes, hats, long sleeves and long pants to help prevent falls and injuries, scratches, bug bites, and over exposure to sun and poisonous plants.*

*Release of Liability – To address the landowners' concerns of liability and to protect yourself and your organization, require all volunteers on the day of the cleanup to sign a volunteer registration form. (See sample on page 15.) For additional protection, consider purchasing general liability insurance or partnering with an organization that already has it.*

*Waterway Cleanups - If entry into a waterway deeper than ankle height is required for trash removal, designate specific individuals to be "Waterway Volunteers" who can and will meet stricter safety requirements. For more information see Keep Pennsylvania Beautiful publication, PEOPLE - A Solution to Waterway Pollution.*

# STEP 6

## Secure Trash and Tire Disposal and Recycling

*Make sure that all materials removed from the site will be properly disposed and/or recycled. When building the community team, invite local waste and scrap haulers to the site to give an estimate of how much waste will need to be disposed as trash and what can be recycled. Be sure to approach trash haulers, landfills, and transfer stations that normally handle waste and other businesses or government entities that have crews and equipment as part of their daily operations. If the cleanup will result in a small amount of trash, the municipality may be able to transport and dispose or recycle the materials.*

*Visit [www.earth911.com](http://www.earth911.com) and the PA Department of Environmental Protection's web site [www.depweb.state.pa.us](http://www.depweb.state.pa.us) keyword Recycle, to help locate the nearest recycling and disposal options.*

*Arrange for an appropriate sized roll-off box from a waste hauler or by contracting with someone with a truck that is suitable for the job. Choose a larger sized roll-off box if unsure of the volume of trash as delivery and removal costs are usually the same. Order the roll-off box(s) to be delivered the day before the cleanup to reduce volunteer and equipment interaction. Be aware that waste haulers must comply with Pennsylvania's Waste Transportation Safety Program, but there are some exceptions for one time projects.*

- *Trash - The general rule is that most metals can be recycled. Consider everything else "trash" because even normally recyclable glass and plastic bottles are too dirty to recycle.*
- *Tires - Proper tire disposal is usually the biggest challenge in organizing a cleanup. Most landfills will only accept shredded tires. Tires must be taken care of separately from other waste by registered tire transporters and processors. Tire disposal and recycling almost always carries a charge, but inviting local tire*

dealers or processors to be part of the team may reduce or eliminate the cost. Disposal costs can range from \$1-\$5 per tire; however, large truck tires can cost considerably more. Ask whoever will be taking the tires if they have any special requirements such as not accepting tires on rims or truck tires. Monetary donations may be used to cover tire hauling and disposal costs.

- *Metals - Make arrangements through a recycler or scrap dealer to recycle the metal. Check to see if they have any special requirements or restrictions. Verify that the dealer is licensed to handle any Freon-containing appliances such as refrigerators and air conditioners and if not ask them to recommend someone. There is usually a cost for Freon-containing appliances, whether or not they still contain Freon. Keep recyclable metals separate from trash and tires.*
- *Hazardous and Questionable Items - Get the advice of the local DEP Solid Waste Specialist if items such as vehicle batteries, motor oil, paints, solvents, pesticides, drug paraphernalia, firearms, questionable containers, or other potentially dangerous items are found. For contact information, visit [www.dep.state.pa.us](http://www.dep.state.pa.us), click on In Your Neighborhood. Also see box below.*
- *Methamphetamine Labs - Contact the Pennsylvania State Police Drug Task Force for more information as these have become common throughout Pennsylvania. Any site suspected of producing methamphetamine should be treated as hazardous.*

Take note that burning of any material from a project like this is not permitted under Pennsylvania law. Verify landfill hours of operation, many close early on Saturdays. Take precautions to secure trash and tires from being scattered if left on site overnight.

**Department of Environmental Protection Office Locations**

Northeast Regional Office.....	570-826-2511
Northcentral Regional Office.....	570-327-3636
Northwest Regional Office.....	814-332-6945
Southeast Regional Office.....	484-250-5900
Southcentral Regional Office.....	717-705-4700
Southwest Regional Office.....	412-442-4000

# STEP 7

## Obtain Cleanup Supplies

Ask the community team and other local supporters to assist with cleanup efforts through donations. Show photos of the site, describe the cleanup plan including long-term maintenance, and be specific with requests. Some of the typical cleanup needs include:

- *Trash bags* – A 30-gallon bag about 1.5 millimeters thick is a good size. Always bring more than anticipated. \*
- *Heavy duty work gloves* – Protects hands from grime and noxious weeds and provides some protection from broken glass and sharp objects. Leather gloves work best, and disposable latex or non-latex gloves may be used underneath during wet or muddy conditions. \*
- *Safety vests* – Makes volunteers highly visible. \*
- *Safety signs* – Have enough Work Crew or Litter Crew Ahead signs to place at all vehicle entry points to the cleanup. These will need to be returned after the cleanup. If needed, plan for directional signs to guide volunteers to the site. \*
- *First aid kit* – (recommended for every cleanup) - Review contents and become familiar with basic procedures.
- *Refreshments* – Drinking water is recommended for every cleanup. Lunch and/or snacks are optional, but much appreciated. Some sources are fast food restaurants, convenience and grocery stores, and homemade goodies.
- *Cell phone* – Keep handy in case of emergencies.
- *Camera* – Designate a volunteer as photographer.
- *Insect repellent* – Spray is more convenient than lotion.
- *Hand wipes* – Use before eating and at the end of the cleanup.
- *Shovel, rake, pitchfork* – Useful for removing shingles, broken drywall and glass, kitty litter, animal carcasses, etc.
- *Ropes, straps, tarps* – Useful for pulling large items uphill.
- *Buckets* – Useful for broken glass and sharp metal items.
- *Survey or Caution tape* – Useful for roping off restricted or dangerous areas.

Be sure to communicate proper dress to the volunteers before the day of the cleanup.



\* May request these items from PennDOT and township and municipal offices or obtain from local hardware stores. Also, register any cleanup event scheduled March through May with the Great American Cleanup of PA to be eligible to receive free work gloves, trash bags, and safety vests from the local PennDOT office. Pick It Up PA Days is a one or two week timeframe within the Great American Cleanup of PA that offers free disposal; dates change yearly. Supplies and disposal are contingent on funding.

# STEP 8

## Day of Cleanup

### *Pre Cleanup Responsibilities -*

- *Erect safety signs at vehicle entry points to the cleanup area and rope or tape off any areas that are restricted to volunteers.*
- *Choose additional cleanup leaders as needed for large or challenging sites.*
- *Consider each volunteer's capabilities and assign duties accordingly.*
- *Ask for 'volunteers' who will be willing to help with unpleasant tasks such as removing animal carcasses, concentrations of dirty diapers, etc.*
- *Spread volunteers out so they have plenty to do and aren't wasting time covering cleaned ground.*
- *Start at one end of the road and work to the other end or start at both ends and work towards the middle, or form a human chain to more easily transport numerous bags or items uphill.*
- *Identify the trash, tire, and scrap metal staging and loading areas.*

*All volunteers must complete and sign a volunteer registration form (or Release of Liability - See sample on page 15. ) that records each volunteer's name and contact information for future correspondence and releases the property owner and cleanup organizer from liability in the event of damages incurred during the cleanup.*

*Cleanup Strategy - Gather everyone together before starting to answer questions and describe workday strategies.*

- *Distribute safety vests, work gloves, trash bags, tools, etc. Offer insect repellent.*
- *Inform volunteers of location of first aid kit, cell phone, and drinking water.*
- *Identify all cleanup leaders.*
- *Identify cleanup area and define boundaries, noting any dangerous areas or restrictions.*

- *Be specific about trash, tire, and scrap metal staging and loading.*
- *Discuss long-term maintenance options if site is active. Some volunteers may be interested in adopting the area. Refer to Step 10. Long-Term Maintenance.*
- *Review Safety Guidelines on page 14.*

*Cleanup Wrap-up -*

- *Wrap-up the event on time.*
- *Thank all volunteers personally and distribute any donated T-shirts or soft drink and food coupons.*
- *Announce if another cleanup will be needed at this site and that all volunteers will be notified when the date is set.*
- *Count the tires and bags of trash and estimate quantities of unbagged trash and scrap metal.*
- *Take 'after' photos from vantage points to show the improvement.*
- *Collect all signs and supplies.*
- *Inspect site for stray items, lunch litter, etc.*
- *Verify that all volunteers have left the site, if working on private property, or are accounted for if working on public property.*

**REVIEW SAFETY GUIDELINES  
WITH ALL VOLUNTEERS**

- *Closely supervise younger volunteers.*
- *Wear bright safety vests at all times.*
- *Wear work gloves while removing or handling any trash.*
- *Bag all trash that will fit into bags and secure tops. Stack or load larger items as designated. Use buckets for broken glass and small, sharp objects.*
- *Do not fill trash bags to capacity to avoid splitting and overexertion. Be careful of sharp and protruding materials.*
- *Do not work near operating equipment.*
- *Do not work during inclement weather.*
- *Face oncoming traffic at all times and stay away from the edge of the roadway.*
- *Remove only items that are clearly visible and recognizable and do not reach into hidden areas.*
- *Take care when removing tires and heavy items from steep slopes to prevent these items from escaping and rolling downhill. All other volunteers are restricted from working below during removal.*
- *Do not remove any suspicious or hazardous substances such as chemical and toxic materials in containers, drug paraphernalia, and Methamphetamine Lab related materials. Alert the cleanup leader who will call the appropriate agency to notify them of suspected substance(s) and location.*
- *Animal carcasses will only be handled by designated volunteers and bagged as trash or left on site.*
- *Be alert for snakes, rodents, and ticks, and avoid noxious weeds and insect nests.*
- *Avoid overexertion and heat problems by drinking plenty of water and taking breaks.*
- *Treat all public and private property with respect.*

# Sample Volunteer Registration

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Organization \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Home Phone \_\_\_\_\_ Work Phone \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail Address \_\_\_\_\_

Cleanup Location \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

## NOTICE

The undersigned, recognizing and assuming all risks of accident and injury, hereby agrees that the following sponsors and volunteers:

will not be liable or legally responsible for any injury sustained by the participant, or for loss or damage to the property owned or in the possession of the participant during, or as a result of, participation in this cleanup project at the above location whether such personal injury or property damage is caused by the negligence of the sponsors or their respective employees, officers, agents, or otherwise.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Parent/guardian if signatory is less than  
18 years of age

\_\_\_\_\_  
Witness, Date

Thank you for volunteering!

Keep Pennsylvania Beautiful developed this form as a general sample only.

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# STEP 9

## Post Cleanup Responsibilities

*People rarely pick up trash for recognition, but recognition is well deserved and goes a long way in keeping them involved in future events. Throughout the project keep record of individual and group contributions. Take every opportunity to mention their support to others, especially when talking with the media. A letter to the editor or a small ad in a local paper is another way to publicly recognize those who helped.*

- *Verify that the waste has been hauled or picked up as planned.*
- *Return any borrowed signs and supplies.*
- *Contact the landfill or transfer station, and/or scrap recycler to get the weights of trash disposed or metals recycled, if the municipality or township did not collect it.*
- *Keep record of the trash, tires, and scrap metal removed, along with the number of volunteers, and use this information to help plan future events.*
- *Contact the media. Describe the cleanup event including details about volunteers and volunteer groups, amounts and types of trash removed, donors and supporters, and maintenance plans. Send 'before' and 'after' photos.*
- *Thank all donors and supporters by sending letters or e-mails remembering to include photos.*

# STEP 10

## Long-Term Maintenance

*Lastly, maintenance is the key to keeping it clean. “Trash attracts trash” is literally true. Fortunately, the reverse seems to be true also as clean communities tend to stay cleaner. Adoption helps keep the site clean, creates a working team, sends a message that dumping here will no longer be tolerated, and creates a lasting solution. Over time the amount of trash collected during maintenance clean-ups will greatly decrease. A formal adoption usually includes the placement of signs to recognize those taking care of the area. Different adoption opportunities are available.*

- *The Keep Pennsylvania Beautiful Adoption Program is available for areas such as non-state maintained roads, waterways, trails, communities, and other public areas.*
- *Other adoption programs across Pennsylvania exist at both local and state levels, including PennDOT’s Adopt-a-Highway Program for state maintained roads.*
- *Consider installing physical deterrents at active dumping areas, if appropriate, as a last resort. Gates, large boulders, guide rails, and large piles of dirt are some options that will block easy access to favored sites and should be discussed with the property owner and/or maintainer.*

<b>Suggested Contacts</b>	<b>Name</b>	<b>Phone #/ Address</b>
---------------------------	-------------	-------------------------

Property Owner \_\_\_\_\_

State/Local Police \_\_\_\_\_

DEP Solid Waste Specialist \_\_\_\_\_

PA Game Commission \_\_\_\_\_

PA Fish and Boat Commission \_\_\_\_\_

Department of Conservation  
and Natural Resources \_\_\_\_\_

County Recycling/  
Solid Waste Coordinator \_\_\_\_\_

Local Government \_\_\_\_\_

County Conservation District \_\_\_\_\_

Fire Department \_\_\_\_\_

State Representative \_\_\_\_\_

Waste Hauler(s) \_\_\_\_\_

Landfill \_\_\_\_\_

Transfer Station \_\_\_\_\_

Scrap Dealer/Recycler(s) \_\_\_\_\_

Newspapers \_\_\_\_\_

Radio/TV Stations \_\_\_\_\_

Keep Pennsylvania Beautiful Affiliate \_\_\_\_\_

# Cleanup Checklist

Site Name \_\_\_\_\_

Cleanup Organizer(s) \_\_\_\_\_

## Before

- \_\_\_\_\_ Survey site
- \_\_\_\_\_ Identify property owners
- \_\_\_\_\_ Contact property owners
- \_\_\_\_\_ Choose cleanup date \_\_\_\_\_ Rain date \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_ Obtain permission to enter
- \_\_\_\_\_ Assess site for cleanup
- \_\_\_\_\_ Secure donations
- \_\_\_\_\_ Verify hauling, disposal, and recycling
- \_\_\_\_\_ Contact local media and secure volunteers
- \_\_\_\_\_ Verify cell phone reception at site and 911 availability
- \_\_\_\_\_ Collect and organize cleanup supplies
- \_\_\_\_\_ Plan for “Before” and “After” photos and take ‘Before’ photos

## Day of Cleanup

- \_\_\_\_\_ Place safety and directional signs as needed
- \_\_\_\_\_ Collect volunteer registration forms
- \_\_\_\_\_ Review workday strategies and Safety Guidelines
- \_\_\_\_\_ Count trash bags, number of tires, and scrap metal
- \_\_\_\_\_ Take “After” photos
- \_\_\_\_\_ Inspect site before leaving and account for all volunteers

## After

- \_\_\_\_\_ Verify waste hauling or removal
- \_\_\_\_\_ Keep records of trash and tire disposal, recycling, all expenses, and in-kind donations
- \_\_\_\_\_ Return supplies
- \_\_\_\_\_ Thank all volunteers, donors, and supporters
- \_\_\_\_\_ Contact local media
- \_\_\_\_\_ Implement long-term maintenance plan

# Notes:

# About Keep Pennsylvania Beautiful

## OUR MISSION

*Empowering Pennsylvanians to make our communities clean and beautiful.*

## OUR VISION

*A clean and beautiful Pennsylvania.*

## OUR GUIDING PRINCIPLES

*Education- the key to encourage positive behaviors toward community improvement. | Individual Responsibility- Improving communities, their environment and quality of life all begins with personal responsibility. | Public-Private Partnerships- Broad-based community alliances are essential to achieve sustainable community improvement. | Volunteer Action- By engaging volunteers, we extend the reach of our educational efforts and multiply the impact of our actions.*



*For more information, contact:*

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