



IOWA DNR



The Iowa Department of Natural Resources is the government agency that leads Iowans in caring for their natural resources. It is responsible for maintaining state parks and forests, protecting the environment, and managing energy, fish, wildlife, and land and water resources in Iowa. For more information, visit www.iowadnr.com.

KEEP IOWA BEAUTIFUL



Keep Iowa Beautiful is a privately funded charitable organization of Iowa citizens who are working for a more beautiful, litter-free Iowa. For more information, visit www.KeepIowaBeautiful.com.

OTHER RESOURCES



- Iowa Society of Solid Waste Operations (ISOSWO) – www.isoswo.org
- Iowa Recycling Association (IRA) – www.iowarecycles.org
- Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) – www.epa.gov
- Keep America Beautiful (KAB) – www.kab.org



Published 2006
DNR/KIB



TAKE A STAND FOR YOUR LAND



A COMMUNITY GUIDE TO COMBAT ILLEGAL DUMPING

Brought to you by
the Iowa Department of Natural Resources and Keep Iowa Beautiful





A MESSAGE FOR ALL IOWA COMMUNITIES



Illegal dumping, the improper disposal of waste materials along roadsides and in ditches, costs Iowa taxpayers millions of dollars each year. Time and money spent by road crews and volunteers for cleanup and law enforcement agencies to investigate could be used for other community needs, such as beautification efforts, hiring another police officer, purchasing a new fire truck or completing a library expansion. Illegal dumping cleanup costs are a waste of tax dollars that could be put to better use in your community.

In addition to the taxpayer burden, illegal dumping poses environmental and health risks, safety problems and negatively impacts economic development. Above all, it is a crime.



In a continuing partnership to deal with litter and illegal dumping, the Iowa Department of Natural Resources and Keep Iowa Beautiful initiated a study and pilot program to evaluate illegal dumping prevention methods in three Iowa communities. They established an Illegal Dumping Prevention committee to help guide the pilot programs. Each of the communities built a local task force of government, law enforcement officials and citizens dedicated to catching and prosecuting illegal dumpers.

This guide is based on the results of those pilot programs. Based on best practices determined by the communities, it provides information and suggestions for creating an effective illegal dumping prevention program in your community.

Now is the time to take action. As an individual or organization that cares about the quality of your community and environment, please make an effort to stop illegal dumping in its tracks!

Sincerely,

Jeffrey Vonk

Director

Iowa Department of Natural Resources

Gerry Schnepf

Executive Director

Keep Iowa Beautiful





A CONTINUING CHALLENGE



Across Iowa, communities and rural areas have chronic illegal dumping sites, where everything from trash bags to building waste and refrigerators to tires is discarded. Most commonly, these items are dumped along roadsides, ditches and fields, and wooded areas.

In a 2002 Iowa Department of Natural Resources (DNR) survey, 66 percent of Iowa city and county officials said they believe illegal dumping is a “somewhat” to “very big” problem.

In addition to **costing taxpayers** millions of dollars each year for cleanup, illegal dumping poses a **threat to the environment and public health**.

Hazardous waste streams can seep into surface and ground water.

Dumping sites can become breeding grounds for insects and rodents, and they diminish the beauty and quality of life near these areas. Debris adjacent to or along roadways also presents a safety hazard to travelers.

The penalty for illegal dumping in Iowa can be as much as \$5,000/day; however, **illegal dumpers are rarely caught and prosecuted**. In many instances, when they are caught the courts dispense minimal penalties, feeling that the issue is not a burden on society. The Iowa Department of Natural Resources (DNR) and local authorities investigate thousands of illegal dumping complaints each year and provide enforcement where possible. Many people who illegally dump know it is illegal but are indifferent to the problem. Others who illegally dump may not be aware of where to take their items for disposal or don't consider the costs associated with cleaning up their illegally dumped trash.



Because people illegally dump for different reasons, it's difficult to provide a “profile” of the typical offender. However, illegal dumping may be associated with certain types of individuals and businesses, such as:

- Construction, demolition, remodeling, roofing or landscaping contractors
- Waste management companies or general hauling contractors
- Automobile repair or tire shops
- Scrap collectors
- Local “do-it-yourselfers”

This is not to suggest that these individuals and businesses are guilty of illegal dumping. In fact, the vast majority disposes of waste correctly and would never consider throwing waste into a ditch or ravine. Like other crimes, a small minority is responsible for creating a big problem.





BEST PRACTICES TO COMBAT ILLEGAL DUMPING



In 2004, the DNR partnered with Keep Iowa Beautiful (KIB) to create a pilot program for combating illegal dumping in the state. The program was implemented in three targeted communities of differing sizes and geography with hopes that best practices could eventually be shared and used by all Iowa communities. The small pilot community's population is less than 25,000, the medium less than 100,000 and the large more than 100,000.

The **Community Guide to Combat Illegal Dumping** is a result of that program. It includes comprehensive, step-by-step instructions for implementing a successful illegal dumping prevention program in your community.

Take a Stand for Your Land

Research suggests that catching illegal dumpers and imposing strict penalties and fines may be the best deterrent to the problem. Local residents can assist law enforcement with that effort by reporting illegal dumping – as it is happening or when they encounter a dump site. For that reason, DNR and KIB developed the **Take a Stand for Your Land** campaign, which encourages people to report illegal dumping to the proper authorities. The campaign pieces also remind residents that illegal dumping – as an environmental threat and the cost to taxpayers for cleanup – is everyone's problem.



In the pilot communities, the campaign proved effective in raising awareness of how to report illegal dumping. Newspaper ads or inserts, which ran in two communities, and radio ads, which ran in all three communities during spring and summer months, were effective methods of reaching local residents with the **Take a Stand for Your Land** message. Media coverage of illegal dumping program activities in all three communities also proved beneficial.

Choosing whether to implement paid mass media tactics (such as radio ads) or more affordable grassroots tactics (such as community cleanup programs) depends on your community size and program budget.



Newspaper insert for Appanoose County.





PILOT PROGRAM ACTIVITIES



These are the public awareness program tactics tackled by the pilot program communities:

Small Community

Newspaper insert

Newspaper articles (occasional information/story angles provided to a local reporter who wrote several articles)

Radio ads

Illegal dumping site cleanup and "Area Under Surveillance" signage

Posters

Litter bag distribution

Survey results indicate the newspaper insert and radio ads were the most effective communication tools.

Mid-Size Community

Newspaper ads

Radio ads

Bumper stickers

Point-of-purchase flyers

Portable display for parades and community events

Survey results indicate newspaper and radio ads were the most effective.



Large Community

Radio ads

Demonstration cleanup and press conference

Flyer

Phone hotline business cards

Window decals

Survey results indicate radio ads and the demonstration cleanup and press conference were most effective.

The success of any tactics your community chooses to pursue depends largely on the aggressiveness and dedication of your task force, commitment from law enforcement, and funding. It's likely a variety of tools can be successful if they're used properly.

To see more survey results and information about what program activities worked best for each pilot community, visit www.iowadnr.com/waste/sw/illdump.

Though the pilot counties each chose different tactics for their programs, they all followed a similar planning process:

- Create a task force
- Develop a plan
- Define key audiences
- Choose and implement tactics
- Measure results

Read on to learn how to implement these steps in your program.





CREATE A TASK FORCE



The first step to creating an effective illegal dumping prevention program is to **engage community members** who are passionate about and/or affected by the issue. **Collaboration** between many groups is critical, so begin by gathering a group of government, business and citizen leaders to form a task force. Designate a chairperson to lead the group and keep members organized. The task force will design and implement your community's prevention plan.

Think creatively when selecting members. Consider representatives from a variety of backgrounds and institutions, such as:

- City council members
- County supervisors
- City and county engineers
- Landfill and solid waste management agencies
- Law enforcement agencies (county and city)
- Public health department and hospitals
- County attorneys and/or judges
- Parks and recreation staff
- Business leaders/owners (small and large)
- Chamber of commerce staff
- Civic/community groups
- Educators and youth representatives
- Tourism/convention and visitors bureau staff
- Rural and urban residents

Law enforcement agencies may be able to provide you with names of citizens who have expressed concern about or reported illegal dumping in your area.

Great Expectations

Clearly **outline roles and expectations** for task force members, including the time and work commitment. Designate a regular meeting time so task force members can schedule a standing appointment on their calendars.



DEVELOP A PLAN



Every successful program needs a roadmap, so make development of a strategic plan your task force's first priority. It doesn't need to be long and laborious, but it should provide a clear outline of where you are, where you want to go and how you'll get there.

Include these pieces:

Define the Problem

Determine the scope of your community's illegal dumping problem. If available, include data detailing the number of problem dump sites and items/types of trash in each. Also, note labor and equipment hours and cost spent on cleanup in your community in the past several years. Include information from law enforcement agencies regarding number of past illegal dumping complaints, arrests and convictions.

If you don't have a clear understanding of the problem in your community, take time to investigate. It's important to have a baseline measurement as you begin the program so you can judge your progress as the plan is enacted. See page 16 for information about implementing a tracking and monitoring system.

Set Goals and Objectives

Next, set goals and objectives based on what the task force wants to accomplish. A goal is usually a long-range, overarching aim, while objectives are more specific and measurable. Set realistic objectives. Task force members will be energized and motivated by achieving milestones.



EXAMPLES:

Goal: To eliminate illegal dumping.

Objective: To increase by 25 percent the number of illegal dumping reports to the sheriff's office by December 31.

Determine Your Audience

As you're developing the plan, consider the different types of people you'll target. Some activities will involve residents while others may be accomplished by county supervisors or law enforcement officers. Listing your audiences will help you understand who you need to reach and begin to generate ideas about how to reach them.

EXAMPLES:

- Residents
- Law enforcement
- Business owners

Choose Your Tactics

Tactics are the activities that will help you reach your objectives. If your objective is to increase the number of illegal dumping reports to the sheriff's office, how will you do that? You may distribute bumper stickers with a reporting hotline, or you might ask the local paper to run an article about illegal dumping and include the reporting number. This is the time to get creative!

Tips for Top-Notch Tactics

- **Brainstorm** many ideas.
- **Select** a reasonable number of activities your group can realistically (time and budget) implement.
- **Prioritize** the list of selected activities from most to least urgent.
- **Create** a timeline and assign responsibilities to task force members.



IDEAS



Community Activities

- Community-wide cleanup day
- Adopt-a-site program
- Portable booth/display or parade float for county fairs and community celebrations
- Civic and youth group cleanups
- Speaker's bureau
- Business partnerships

Materials

- Bumper stickers or window decals
- Posters or billboards
- Flyers or grocery bag stuffers
- Radio or TV public service announcements
- Newspaper ads or newspaper inserts
- Church bulletin inserts
- Hotline or toll-free reporting phone number
- Web site
- Community newsletter
- Communications to rental property landlords (renters may leave behind items that need to be disposed of)
- Communications to hunters/outdoors groups (hunters may find dump sites)
- For those communities that require building permits, consider provisions requiring proof of disposal at a landfill/recycling center before issuing a certificate of occupancy.



- Consider creating an ordinance requiring private individuals contracting with haulers to provide partial payment to haulers, with final payment based on a receipt/proof of purchase of disposal at a landfill/recycling center.

Media

- Letters to the editor
- Newspaper guest editorials
- Contact reporters and suggest a news story or article about the program/activities

Education

- School outreach program
- Neighborhood training sessions
- Training for postal and delivery carriers who may spot dump sites on their routes
- Training for law enforcement and judges

Government/Policy/Enforcement

- Surveillance cameras at common/potential illegal dump sites
- "Area Under Surveillance" and "No Dumping" signage
- Reward program
- Ordinance changes
- License haulers
- Increase penalties and fines
- Create alternative waste drop-off sites
- Extend landfill hours
- Subsidize landfill fees





MEASURE SUCCESS



Measure your program's results regularly to gauge effectiveness. For instance, conduct an annual survey or track reporting phone calls monthly.

Here are a few ways to measure your success:

- Surveys (including an initial survey before the program begins as a baseline)
- Number of calls reporting illegal dumping
- Number of dump sites
- Number of arrests, convictions and fines
- Number of participants in program activities (individuals, clubs/service groups and businesses)

MEASURE SUCCESS

Thank you for taking the time to read through and complete this questionnaire.

Worksheet - Circle the appropriate response.

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CREATION OF A MONITORING/ TRACKING SYSTEM



Commonly, illegal dumping incidents are handled on a case-by-case basis by individual departments or agencies within a community with no cohesive or cooperative prevention or cleanup plan. An illegal dumping tracking/monitoring system shared by all agencies involved in the program (such as sheriff's department, health department, roads department) is one of the most valuable ways for communities to adequately assess and address the problem. This collaboration will ensure that agencies are sharing information consistently and efficiently.



One effective tracking/monitoring strategy is to create a web-based, password-protected application that allows agencies to centrally report and store illegal dumping data. Data can be retrieved and manipulated to show illegal dumping patterns and costs, as well as clarify the responsible agency. Clarifying jurisdiction lines is important to ensure prompt cleanup and avoid duplication.

Participants should commit to:

- Enter historical records
- Enter labor/cost data
- Track and enter case enforcement and prosecution
- Forward initial report to appropriate agency
- Share ongoing costs (annual web host fee, monthly hotline answering service)

Also, consider integrating a phone hotline reporting system with the database for public illegal dumping reports. According to one pilot program, implementing a database reporting and tracking system immediately increased communications between agencies, resulting in faster response and cleanup. In the recorded message, use language such as, "Please be assured proper action will be taken," so callers know the site may not be cleaned up immediately.

TAKE A STAND FOR YOUR LAND

Report illegal dumping in Linn County

362.2252



Hotline Card for Linn County



TAKE A STAND FOR YOUR LAND

Report illegal dumping

For more information about planning an illegal dumping prevention program, or to obtain an electronic copy of this guide, visit: www.iowadnr.com/waste/sw/illdump or www.KeepIowaBeautiful.com. Customizable template materials including posters, flyers, brochures, radio and newspapers ads, developed by DNR and KIB for your community's use, are also available at these sites.

To report illegal dumping or littering in your community, call the 1-800-NOLITTR hotline (665-4887). The hotline offers options to report littering and illegal dumping, as well as information on how to adopt a roadway, park, river, lake or other public area, and how you can help to Keep Iowa Beautiful.

