

Roadside Cleanup

Tailgate Safety Talk

Most of the trash on the side of the road is not hazardous; however, some items found along the side of the road can pose dangers. Consider these tips and advice for making roadside cleanup as safe as possible.

Personal Protective Equipment (PPE).

- Safety vests. The danger of nearby traffic makes high visibility gear essential. Preferably, everyone should be wearing retroreflective safety vests.
- Footwear. The roadside (or waterways) is often sloping and/or uneven ground. Grippy and water-resistant footwear is advised; closed-toe should be a requirement.
- Gloves. These are recommended but be careful of a sense of security. Latex gloves are great for keeping icky stuff off your fingers, but they won't guard against sharp objects, so still watch where you're sticking your fingers.
- Clothing. Long pants and long-sleeve shirts are recommended to guard against a number of threats.



Pests, of course, can be an issue, depending on the season. Sprays, long pants, long-sleeved shirts, and hats should all be considered. For the more reactive species, such as snakes, care should be taken when overturning larger objects; don't surprise them and you'll probably be fine.

Hazardous materials.

- First, just be on the lookout for things beyond the candy wrapper, soda bottle, and cigarette butt. Things that don't seem to go together or that don't look like they came from a mere insensitive road traveler.
- Anything that has markings you don't understand or looks like it could be toxic, explosive, or otherwise dangerous to handle, you're probably in over your head and it's time to touch base with law enforcement and/or the Delaware Department of Natural Resources and Environmental Control ([DNREC](#)).
- Needles can crop up often; certainly, if they are more than just a syringe, they should go directly into a sharps container rather than the trash.
- Discarded stamp bags or other drug paraphernalia. As a non-user, even a small touch of the residue on these can put you in the hospital or worse. If you see it, step back and call the authorities.
- While the cooking of crystal methamphetamine is on a minor scale in Delaware, at least as of the last DEA Intelligence [Report](#), the small, one-pot style production labs still produce a lot of



dangerous refuse that they are fond of getting rid of along roadways, in parks, or wherever no one is seemingly looking. Some of the things to look out for is shown in an older but still relevant Colorado [video](#). For some of these, finding one or two should not be alarming, but a collection of them requires a step back.

- Distressed or colored vegetation can be signs that hazardous materials are or have been present. Step back, reassess, and consider calling the authorities.
 - Smell of cat urine, rotten eggs, ammonia, acetone, or any strong chemical odor.
 - Discarded cooking glassware, measuring tools, beakers, or other laboratory glass.
 - Stained coffee filters.
 - Hot plates or cooking stoves.
 - Propane tanks with a blue discoloration around the valve.
 - So-called “death bag” or “death bottle” – a bag or container (sometimes with tubing coming out) filled with kitty litter. These are filters that produce phosphine, a gas that can damage the lungs and cause chemical burns.
 - Multiple pseudoephedrine (think Sudafed) packages.
 - Batteries
 - Flammables (lighter fluid, mineral spirits, denatured alcohol)
 - Butane lighters or matchbooks with wiped off striker pads
 - Epsom salts, iodine crystals
- Bottom line, if in doubt about an odd assortment of debris that seems out of place along the roadway, step away and put a call into the authorities to let the professionals have a look.

Dead animals. First, ensure it is dead. An injured animal can feel very threatened and can cause you serious harm. Next, use a shovel or other tool, if you can, to collect the animal, but otherwise try turning a trash bag inside out and wrapping it around and underneath to minimize potential of contact on the outside of the bag. Obviously, should be coordinated and completed in accordance with your disposal facility. Cleanup your tools and yourself when you're done.



Users of this tailgate talk are advised to determine the suitability of the information as it applies to local situations and work practices and its conformance with applicable laws and regulations.

