



NEWS RELEASE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

SURVEY REVEALS SURPRISING DRIVER BEHAVIORS FOR LITTER, POLLUTION *Littering and Polluting Behaviors on California's Highways are Focus of the "Protect Every Drop" Campaign*

SACRAMENTO – Caltrans released new survey data today that shows nearly half of all motorists surveyed admit to sometimes littering along the state's highways. Nearly one in five California motorists report intentionally dumping something on the side of the highway. Survey respondents confirmed they improperly disposed of items ranging from old furniture and appliances to green waste from their yard such as lawn clippings, branches or leaves. In addition, another 6 percent of motorists admitted that they fail to pick up waste left by pets on the side of the highway.

"These findings are staggering because this is not accidental public behavior, but rather a conscious decision to improperly discard or leave behind debris along California freeways," said Caltrans Director Malcolm Dougherty. "These items create roadway hazards while also directly affecting the cleanliness of our highways and the waterways. When it rains, stormwater flushes highway debris and pollutants into the storm drain system flowing to open bodies of water."

The quantitative survey was conducted to measure California highway drivers' awareness, attitudes and behaviors when it comes to maintaining clean highways for the purposes of clean waterways. The survey was conducted in February 2016 by ConsumerQuest Research. Responses were collected from more than 300 California drivers across the state age 18 years of age and older who had driven on California freeways or highways in the last 30 days.

Below are several additional survey findings:

- **Making the Connection:** Overwhelmingly, 84 percent of Californians believe there is a connection between highway pollution and the quality of water. Virtually all of these motorists say that knowing this encourages them to maintain their vehicle properly and not litter or cause pollution on highways.





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- **Taking Action:** The primary action taken as a result of understanding the connection between roadway pollution and water quality is to avoid littering (30 percent), followed distantly by making sure there are no leaking fluids (14 percent).
- **Tire Maintenance:** Only half of California motorists regularly check to make certain their tires are properly inflated. Perhaps more concerning is that nearly one in five California motorists report that they “go by how my vehicle feels,” are sometimes “not totally certain,” (how full their tires are) or “don’t really worry about this.”
- **Leaky Car Fluids:** Four in 10 motorists discovered a fluid leak from their vehicle in the past several years. While most repaired it immediately, a significant portion did not. Of those who discovered leaking fluids, 20 percent report waiting at least a few days to take action or topping off and not worrying about it.

Caltrans recently launched a new stormwater public education and outreach campaign called “*Protect Every Drop*” to educate Californians about the sources and pathways of stormwater pollution, including the items found to be improperly discarded during the survey. The campaign encourages motorists to reduce the pollutants that affect water quality in California’s streams, rivers, lakes and coastal waters, in order to keep them drinkable, swimmable and fishable. The campaign addresses several actions the public can take, including:

- Performing routine vehicle and tire maintenance, which reduces pollution from vehicles on the roadway.
- Properly disposing of trash and recycling.
- Securing and covering truckloads that may fall off or blow out during travel.

The campaign also addresses other pollutants found in highway stormwater that may originate from non-highway sources such as pesticides and bacteria from natural sources.

“The polluted water that runs off California highways discharges either to an adjacent city or county storm drain system, or to a stream, river or lake – and eventually to bays and the ocean,” says Ana Serrano, PE, Office of Stormwater Program Implementation, Division of Environmental Analysis at Caltrans. “We need every motorist to do their part to help keep California’s highways and waterways clean.”

The comprehensive Caltrans Stormwater Awareness, Attitudes and Behaviors Study Pre-Campaign Baseline Results can be found at: <http://www.protecteverydrop.com/resources>.

Caltrans owns and operates storm drain systems along more than 50,000 lane miles of the state highway system, which discharge into every major watershed of the state. Stormwater picks up pollution washed off vehicles and roadways when it rains, which makes its way through ditches and pipes that make up storm drain systems.



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About the Campaign

The three-year “*Protect Every Drop*” educational campaign includes a cohesive and integrated public relations, advertising and community outreach program across California aimed at helping change the behavior of Californians in a way that leads to improved water quality. The campaign website can be found at protecteverydrop.com and includes tips and information on reducing stormwater pollution. The campaign is being guided by a steering committee that includes Caltrans, the State Water Boards and the California Stormwater Quality Association.

For more information, visit ProtectEveryDrop.com.

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