

Innovative Partnerships to Tackle Vape Waste and Youth Vaping



Elyse Levine Less, JD, MPH, Tobacco-Free Alliance

This presentation is funded by a Commercial Tobacco-Free Communities grant from the Minnesota Department of Health.



Creating the Vape Waste Team

> Connects tobacco prevention with environmental and social justice issues

> Engages youth in policy change to both end the sale of flavored tobacco and address environmental harms these products cause

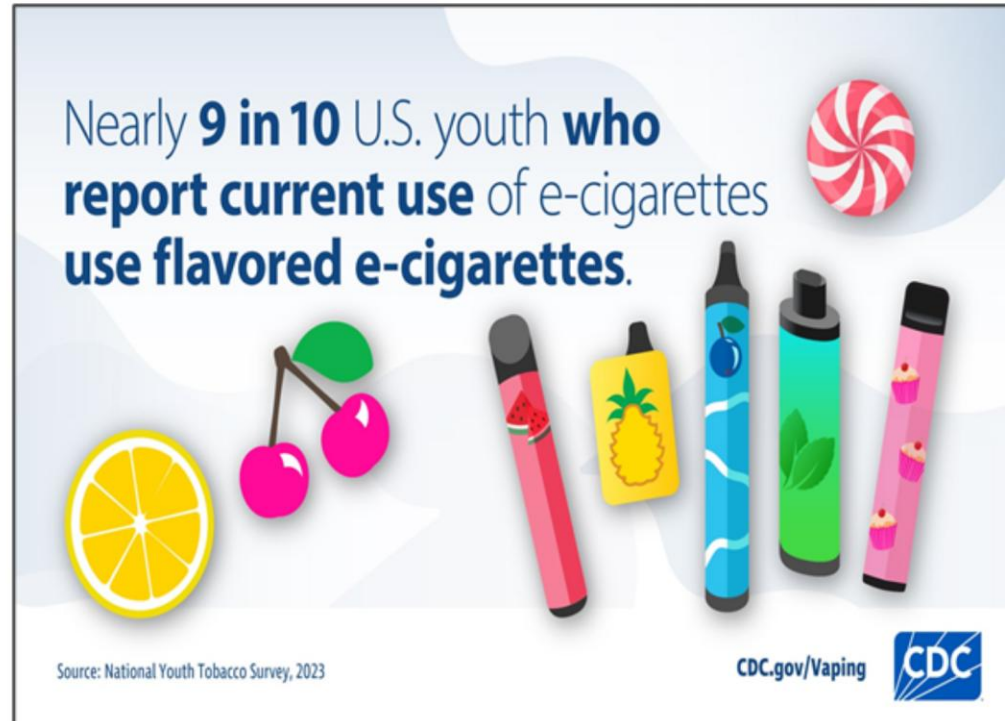


Photo sources: Top R: <https://www.cdc.gov/tobacco/e-cigarettes/why-youth-vape.html>
Bottom L: <https://www.aces.edu/blog/topics/home/vaping-the-latest-environmental-problem/>

Project Goals by Year

01

Year 1

- Develop team and train them on vaping prevention and environmental harms
- Assess local environmental impact of e-cigarettes through a student survey



02

Year 2

- Survey Analysis
- Use survey findings to inform development of community-based PSE strategies



03

Year 3

- Student-led collaborative projects and messaging
- Support sustainable PSE change within the project area



Dakota County School Vape Disposal Program

- **Kjirsten Anderson, Health Promotion Specialist**
- **Kristi Otterson, Household Hazardous Waste Program Manager**
- **Ali Vandercook, School Recycling Program Coordinator**



School Vape Disposal Toolkit

Scan the QR code to
access the toolkit.

For more information about Dakota County's
school vape disposal program, contact Kjirsten
Anderson

kjirsten.anderson@co.dakota.mn.us



Year 3: Safe Vape Waste Disposal Earth Day Project

School Outreach and Engagement

➤ Emailed invitation to principals and school district administrators with FAQs

➤ Highlighted the educational and environmental value of participating

➤ Promoted flexibility so schools could participate in ways that worked for them

➤ Offered full support and resources to make participation easy

HOST A SAFE VAPE WASTE DISPOSAL EVENT AT YOUR SCHOOL THIS SPRING!

The Need: Nearly 80% of surveyed Dakota County high school students were unaware that vape devices cannot be thrown away in the trash or recycling.*

The Goal: Provide a supervised, judgment-free opportunity for students to learn about the environmental harms of vape waste and safely dispose of devices before entering school.

The Details:

- One-day event located outside of your school building during the week of Earth Day (April 23-25, 2025).
- Fully coordinated and staffed by Dakota County Public Health, Tobacco-Free Alliance, and Dakota County Environmental Resources.
- Students turn in discarded or collected devices and learn about the harms of vape waste at the outdoor collection site, then leave with a wellness kit.
- Dakota County and Tobacco-Free Alliance staff transport the vape waste to The Recycling Zone for proper disposal.

Get Involved: To learn more and coordinate the event at your school site, contact kjirsten.anderson@co.dakota.mn.us or elyse@mntobaccofreealliance.org.

*Survey conducted by the Vape Waste Team, a group of Dakota County high school students coordinated by Tobacco-Free Alliance.



DISPOSAL EVENT FAQs

What is expected of my school when we participate?

Schools will designate the outdoor collection site and help Dakota County and Tobacco-Free Alliance promote the event to students in the weeks leading up to the event date. Dakota County and Tobacco-Free Alliance staff will take care of all other coordination and day-of staffing.

Our school has a commercial tobacco-free policy. Will this event violate that policy or send the wrong message?

Policies prohibiting all commercial tobacco products on school grounds are essential to maintaining a safe school environment and protecting student health. However, discarded and littered vapes continue to be a problem on many school campuses.

This event is not a compromise of school policy but an enhancement of its goals. It provides a one-time exception in a strictly controlled environment to remove harmful items, reduce waste, and educate students. The event is structured to ensure compliance with all other school rules while directly benefiting the school community.

How will we protect everyone's safety at the event?

All hazardous waste disposal protocols will be followed. Students will be asked to place vape devices into sealed plastic bags (Ziploc bags) before turning them in at a table staffed by Dakota County and Tobacco-Free Alliance employees. School administrators will not be present, so students can turn in devices without fear of punishment. Dakota County and Tobacco-Free Alliance staff will wear gloves and store collected devices in vape disposal boxes provided by Dakota County Environmental Resources.



Event Development and Promotion:

Audiences:

- > Students
- > School community

Languages:

- > English
- > Spanish

Sites:

- > Received commitment from 3 schools
- > 2 sites on school property
- > 1 off-site location with 2 schools participating

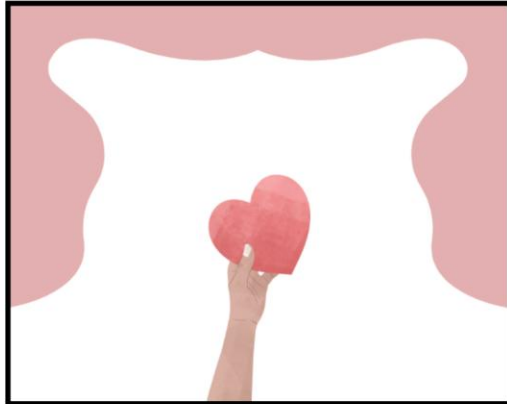
Platforms:

- > VWT social media
- > School media
- > School announcements
- > School news (paper and news station)
- > Lunch tabling



Information and Gift Bag Provided to Participants

Created by Students:

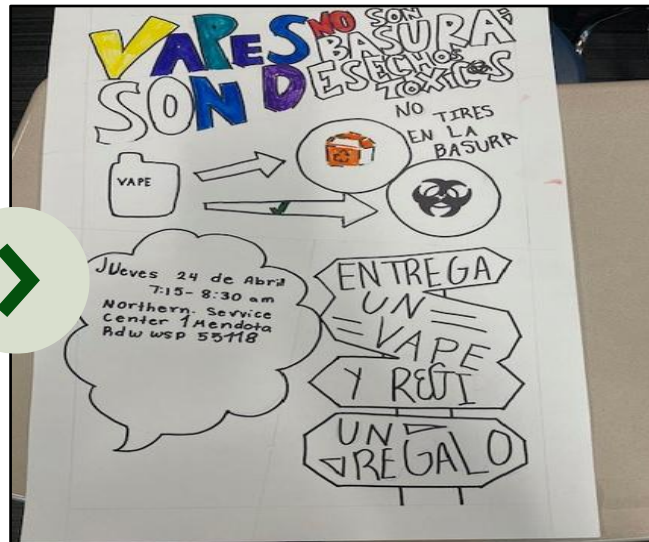


School Event Promotion Examples:

Partner school B



Partner school A



Partner school C



Environmental Harms of Vape Waste Lunch Trivia

➤ Increased education on the harms of vape waste on the environment

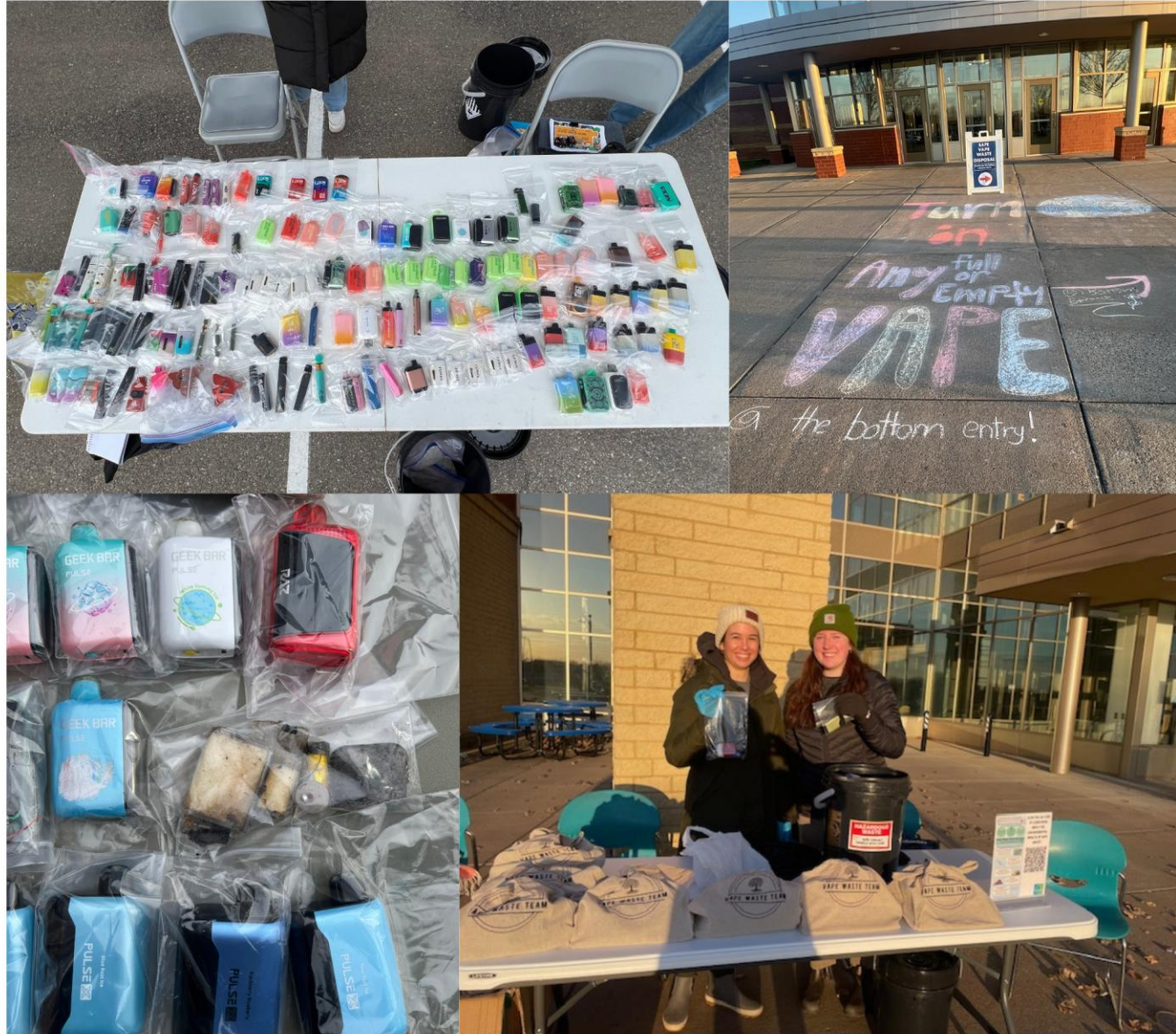


➤ Created a space for students to ask questions and explain the event in detail



Photos: Vape Waste Team members leading lunch trivia the week of the event

Event Day Photos



Outcomes from the Three School Sites Combined:

- Total Devices Collected: 214
- Participants Engaged: 67+ students participated
- Most Common Devices:
 - 66 Geek Bars
 - 32 Loons
- Most Common Flavor: mint



Photo: Example of devices collected from one pilot site

Key Takeaways From School Partners:

- All schools expressed interest in participating again next year.
- Reduced Vaping Incidents (Partner School A)
 - Fewer vape detector activations
 - More students voluntarily turned in devices
 - Staff emphasized a non-punitive approach
- Broad Educational Impact (Partner School A)
 - “The education is valuable for the entire school community, not just those who vape.”
- Broad Community Support (Partner School B)
 - “I think that it's helpful for other districts to see that there was general community support and that students were appropriately [participating in the event].”
- Strong First-Year Impression (Partner School C)
 - Described the event as a “great first year” that raises awareness and encourages responsible disposal

Next Steps for the Vape Waste Team

- Planning for 2026 Earth Day Collection Events

- Using Our Findings for Advocacy

- Share data from our project (e.g., % of flavored vapes collected or # of students who've seen vape waste at school).

- Use these findings to advocate for stronger local or state policies such as ending the sale of flavored commercial tobacco products.

- Campaign Ideas to Support Advocacy

- Create posters, social media posts, or short videos to raise awareness.

- Highlight how flavored products attract youth and contribute to waste.

- Encourage peers and community members to support policies that reduce youth access to flavored commercial tobacco products.

Recommendations for Communities Interested In Starting a Youth-Focused Vape Waste Team:



STEP 1

Build Strategic Partnerships

Reach out to schools, local public health departments, and community groups

Identify opportunities to collaborate and expand your project's reach



STEP 2

Recruit and Support a Strong Student Team

Prioritize building a diverse, committed group of student leaders

Offer stipends for their time and leadership

Ensure the group reflects different backgrounds and experiences



STEP 3

Establish Group Structure and Expectations

Co-create clear expectations, team norms, and defined roles

Provide regular check-ins and support to sustain engagement



STEP 4

Build Knowledge

Facilitate training on the health and environmental harms of vapes, leadership, and advocacy skills



STEP 5

Assess Needs and Identify Gaps

Guide students in assessing school and community needs

Use tools like surveys, interviews, or community conversations

Help them identify gaps in vape disposal options and awareness



STEP 6

Support Student-Led Action

Help youth develop projects based on their findings

Encourage campaigns to raise awareness among peers and adults

Plan a safe vape waste disposal event in partnership with local schools, public health, and environmental agencies

Coming soon.... Vape Waste Team Toolkit

Scan the QR code to join our waiting list, and we'll send you the toolkit as soon as it's available.



Student Education Resources



WWT Training and Resources List: (Current as of July 2025)

PREVENTION TRAINING RESOURCES	
Resource Link	Information
You and Me, Together Vape-Free Curriculum Tobacco Prevention Toolkit Stanford Medicine	The You and Me, Together Vape-Free curriculum is part of the Stanford Tobacco Prevention Toolkit , a 5-lesson evidence-based curriculum created by the Stanford REACH Lab, its Youth Action Board, educators, healthcare providers, and scientists across the U.S.
Lesson 3: What a Waste! Impact of Cigarettes and E-cigarettes on the Environment	Middle School and High School version
Association for Non smokers - Minnesota (ANSR): Tobacco 101	Lesson Ten: Environmental Impacts The curriculum is geared towards middle and high school students and can be used in a classroom, after school or out-of-school setting.
TFA: Unpacking Myths and Facts about Vaping	This 1-hour workshop tailored for youth in grades 6-10, addresses the harms of vaping and other nicotine products, the tobacco industry's targeted marketing practices and resources for quitting.
Youth Tobacco Cessation Toolkits	American Academy of Pediatrics toolkits for tobacco advocacy and cessation resources for use in schools, clinical practice, and health settings.
ENVIRONMENTAL TRAINING RESOURCES	
Resource Link	Information
Commercial Tobacco Pollution Public Health Law Center	Video, webinar, and news updates created by the Public Health Law Center on tobacco product waste
Vape Waste 2 Truth Initiative - A toxic plastic problem: E-cigarette waste and the environment Another reason to quit vaping? The environmental impact of e-cigarettes Time - The Overlooked Environmental Impact of Vaping E-Cigarette and Environment The environmental impact of vape products: Pollution from production to disposal	Articles and studies on the environmental harms of vape waste

MN Pollution Control Agency Hazardous Waste Guidelines MN Pollution Control Agency Best Practices on Vaping Liquids, e-cigarettes, and other nicotine wastes EPA Guidelines on How to Safely Dispose of E-Cigarettes (including factsheets) Public Health Law Center - Guidelines on How to Dispose of E-Cig Waste	Proper disposal information and regulatory guidelines
Vape waste Colorado guidance...	Information about Colorado's school vape waste disposal program
TOBACCO PREVENTION POLICY RESOURCES	
Resource link	Information
U.S. E-Cigarette Regulations - 50 State Review	A snapshot created by the Public Health Law Center of U.S. e-cigarette regulations based on a survey of current state statutes in the 50 states, Washington, D.C., and five U.S. territories
E-Cigarettes Public Health Law Center	All things e-cigarette - from the Public Health Law Center website
United States Resources - Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids	Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids state and issue database
ENDING THE SALE OF FLAVORED TOBACCO...	Resources and fact sheets on ending the sale of flavored tobacco products.
Countertools - Endgame Strategies BMJ - Endgame Strategies	"Endgame Strategies" are initiatives aimed at permanently changing or eliminating the structural, political, and social factors that sustain the tobacco epidemic, with the goal of ending it within a set timeframe.
Calculating the potential environmental impact of a menthol cigarette ban in the USA	Study findings on the impact of a US menthol ban on reducing littered cigarettes.
PHLC webinar Alternatives to Suspension for Com...	This Public Health Law Center webinar features a panel of experts who discuss alternatives to suspension in K-12 policy enforcement at the state, district, and school levels, including lessons learned from communities that have implemented non-punitive measures and other public health best practices that prioritize the health and well-being of students who struggle with nicotine addiction.



Questions?

Innovative Partnerships to Tackle Vape Waste
Elyse Levine Less, Tobacco-Free Alliance
Elyse@mntobaccofreealliance.org



BEYOND THE PRINCIPAL'S DRAWER: USING VAPE WASTE AS A CATALYST FOR CHANGE

Prevention Program Sharing 2025

Elyse Less
Willow Anderson

THE PUBLIC HEALTH LAW CENTER



LEGAL TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE



Legal Research



Policy Development, Implementation, Defense



Publications



Trainings



Direct Representation



Lobby

OVERVIEW

- The problem: We are not going to “clean up” our way out of this problem
- Schools
- Policies: What qualifies as an “upstream” solution?
- Litigation
- Resources
- Discussion



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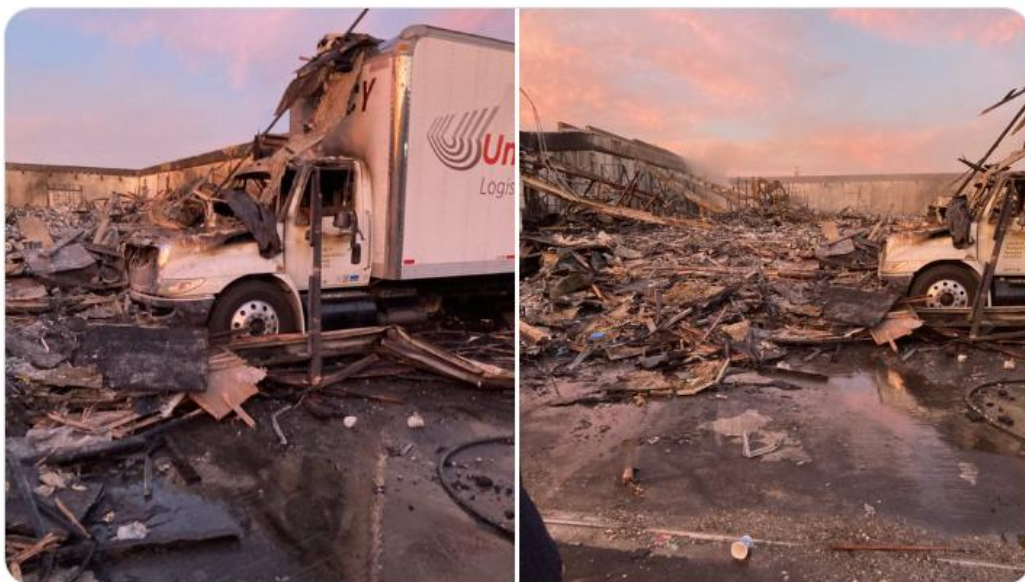


DTSC

@CaliforniaDTSC

A massive e-cigarette & butane storage building sparked hundreds of small explosions during a fire in [#BoyleHeights](#) early Friday morning.

[#DTSC](#)'s Emergency Response crew was onsite to contain the burning chemicals while 120 [#LosAngeles](#) firefighters extinguished the flames.



5:18 PM • Nov 7, 2022 from Los Angeles, CA



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THE HILL

ENERGY & ENVIRONMENT

Why vapes and e-cigarettes are bad for the planet

BY ALEJANDRA O'CONNELL-DOMENECH - 05/20/23 4:00 PM ET



SHARE



TWEET



The exact amount of such waste produced from unrecycled vapes and e-cigarettes is hard to pin down. And the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) does not have any data to quantify the volume of plastic waste produced by vapes, a spokesperson told The Hill.

But The Bureau of Investigative Journalism estimates in the United States, about five vapes are thrown away every second. That amounts to 150 million devices ending up in landfills or on the ground over the course of a year.

Source: [Why vapes and e-cigarettes are bad for the planet | The Hill](#)



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E-CIGARETTE/VAPES HAZARDOUS WASTE

Nicotine and nicotine salts in e-cigarette devices

- Classified as an acute hazardous waste by the EPA

Devices are extremely difficult to recycle

Harmful to humans even at low doses

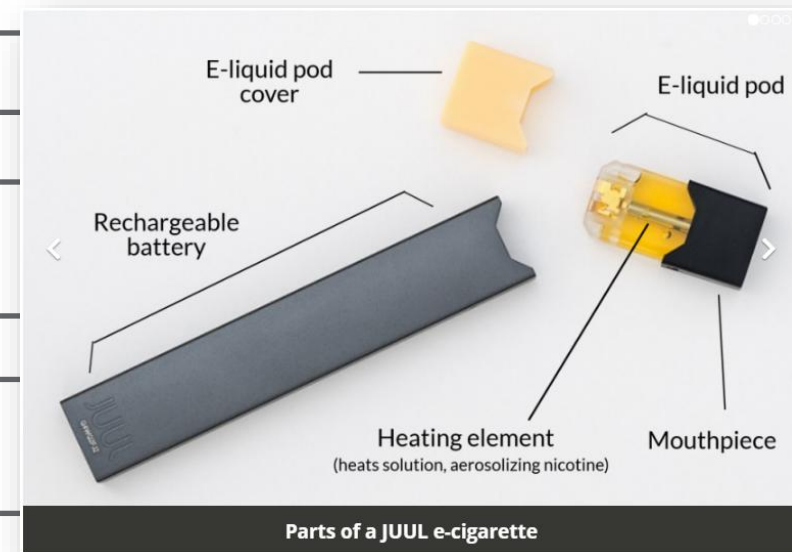
- To dispose of must be handled like hazardous waste

Batteries

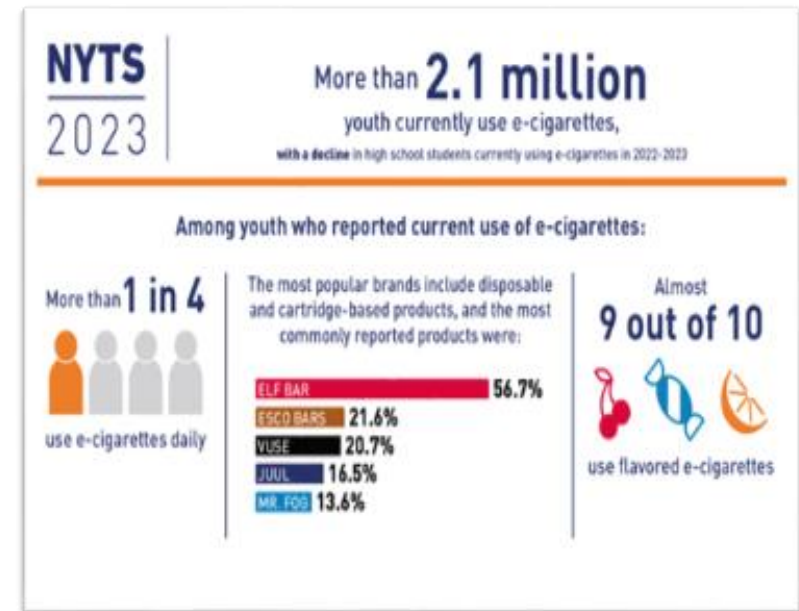
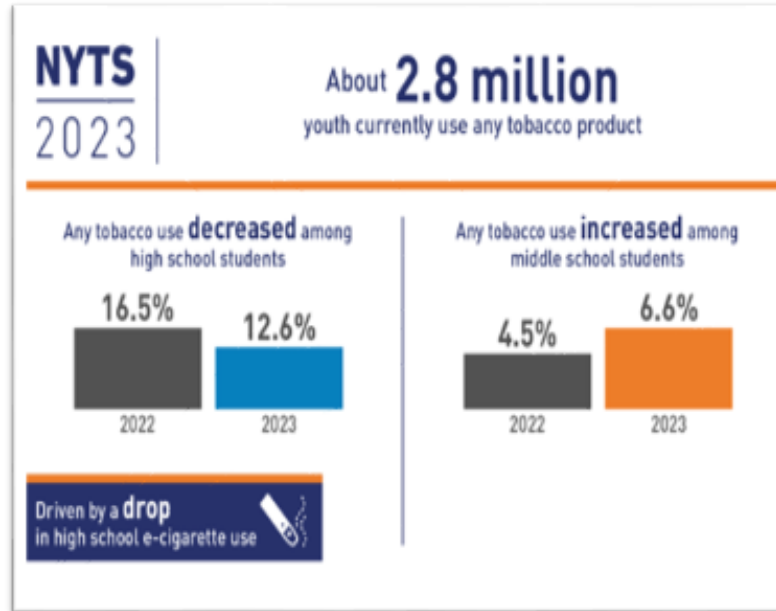
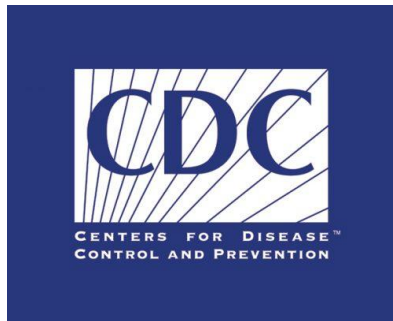
- Hazardous waste, fire and explosion risk

Metals

- Leaching of cobalt and other toxic metals



COMMERCIAL TOBACCO PRODUCT USE AMONG MIDDLE AND HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS, 2023



Source: cdc.gov: [“Tobacco Product Use among Middle and High School Students — United States, 2023.”](#)

FLAVORED E-CIGARETTE PRODUCTS NICOTINE CONTENT COMPARED TO CIGARETTES



Loon Air:
6000 puffs (13 ml x 60 mg)
= 26 packs of cigarettes



Loon Pluto: 2500+Puffs
(6 ml x 50 mg)
= 10 packs of cigarettes



Loon Juice Box:
4000+Puffs (14 ml x 50 mg)
= 23 packs of cigarettes

NICOTINE IS STILL NOT HEALTHY

1964



2025

HEALTH RISKS OF NICOTINE EXPOSURE

A Literature Review



This literature review provides summaries of a few relevant recent studies (2015 to 2024) on the health risks of nicotine across all delivery forms: combustible tobacco (smoking), e-cigarettes (vaping), heat-not-burn products, smokeless tobacco, and pharmaceutical nicotine replacement therapies. Each item provides a brief overview of the study's methodology, key findings, and significance.

Nicotine's Systemic Health Effects (General)

MISHRA ET AL. (2015)

Harmful Effects of Nicotine

INDIAN JOURNAL OF MEDICAL AND PAEDIATRIC ONCOLOGY

DOI: 10.4103/0971-5851.151771

This metastudy compiles animal and human studies focusing solely on nicotine (apart from the tar and smoke of tobacco). The review finds that nicotine poses numerous health hazards: it increases the risk of cardiovascular, respiratory, and gastrointestinal disorders, weakens the



Know the Health Risks



Image Credit: www.confirmbiosciences.com

E-cigarette users, including young adults, displayed worrisome changes in cardiovascular function and performed significantly worse on exercise stress testing than people who did not use any nicotine products.

2022 preliminary study, University of Wisconsin School of Medicine

OCTOBER 10, 2025, IPA PUBLISHES LANDMARK POSITION PAPER

E-Cigarettes and the Nicotine Epidemic: Statement From the International Pediatric Association

Monika Arora, PhD,^{1,2} Muralidhar M. Kulkarni, MD,³ Shishirendu Ghosal, MPH,¹ Aishwarya Sathyan, MPH,⁴
Mansi Gupta, MOT,¹ Simran Verma, MPH,² Mychelle Farmer, MD,⁵ Adamos Hadjipanayis, PhD,^{6,7}
Jonathan D. Klein, MD, MPH,^{4,8,9} Jonathan Winickoff, PhD,^{10,11} Naveen Thacker, MD,⁴ Stanton A. Glantz, PhD¹²

“In contrast to early hopes and assumptions, e-cigarettes are not an effective harm reduction strategy for adults and pose a serious risk to nicotine-naïve youth.”

PUNITIVE MEASURES DISCOUNT INDUSTRY TARGETING

- \$9.5 billion/year spent on marketing, vast majority in the retail environment.
- 90% of youth report exposure to cigarette, 80% to e-cigarette ads.





Image from Flickr Commons author unknown



Image from The Guardian, May 13, 2023

New York Times, May 11, 2023

Father's Vaping Supplies Fueled Fire That Killed Mother and 2 Children



ABC Action News, TV Producer Dead After Vape Pen Exploded



RECYCLING TRUCK DUMPS LOAD ON SUMMIT AVENUE AFTER CATCHING FIRE





Photo credit: St. Paul Fire Department

HOW TO REMOVE AN EMBEDDED BATTERY IN A “DISPOSABLE” E-CIGARETTE?

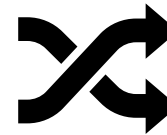


THE COST OF TOBACCO PRODUCT WASTE

What is the price of removing a battery?



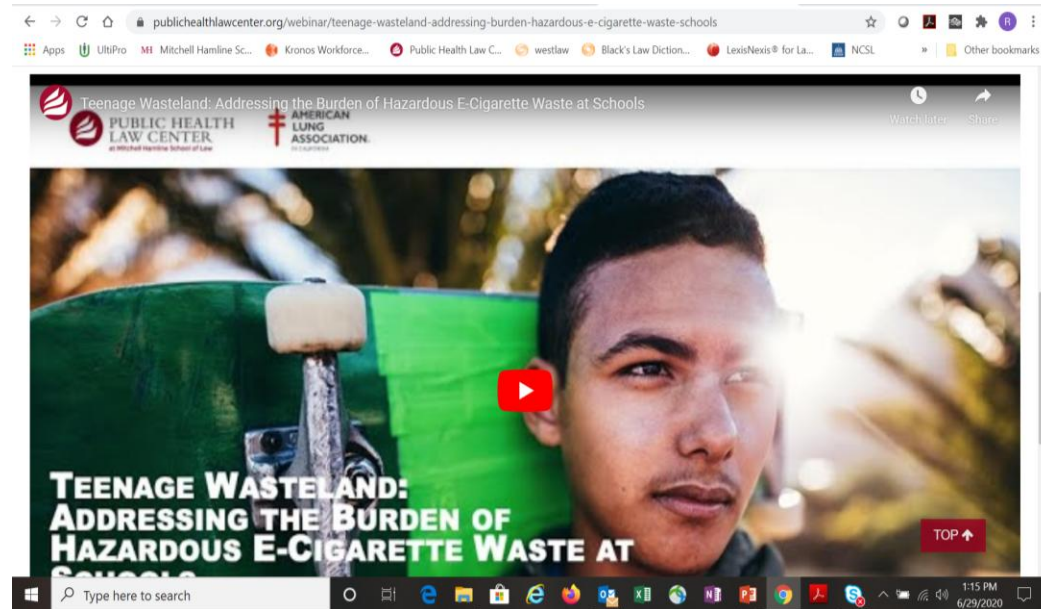
What is the price of “disposing” of e-cigarettes?





A box of vaping products confiscated from students or thrown away at Boulder High School. The school's assistant principal collects items for later delivery to the county's hazardous waste facility.
John Daley/Colorado Public Radio

CONFISCATION AND PROPER DISPOSAL OF TOBACCO PRODUCT WASTE



[Addressing the Burden of Hazardous E-Cigarette Waste at Schools](#)

DISPOSING OF E-CIGARETTE WASTE

FAQ for Schools and Others



Schools and other public institutions are coping with many unforeseen consequences as a result of the e-cigarette epidemic.¹ From installing costly bathroom monitors to redirecting counselor time to deal with the ramifications of addiction, schools are expending significant resources to respond to an industry-created crisis.



Photo: Jeremiah Mock²

[FAQ for Schools and Others](#)

SCHOOLS



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TOBACCO PRODUCT WASTE AND THE ENVIRONMENT IN K-12 POLICY



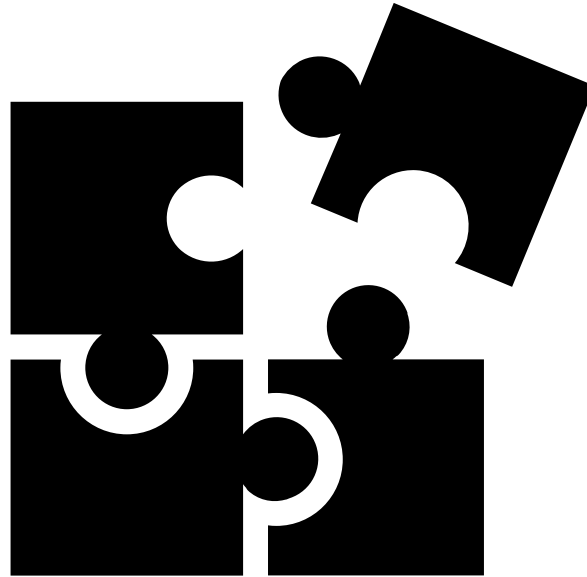
TPW IS A SOCIAL JUSTICE ISSUE



ENCOURAGES PEER TO PEER INTERACTION



ALREADY ALIGNS WITH COMMERCIAL TOBACCO CONTROL POLICIES



DOWNSTREAM PROBLEMS



DISPOSING OF E-CIGARETTE WASTE

FAQ for Schools and Others



Schools and other public institutions are coping with many unforeseen consequences as a result of the e-cigarette epidemic.¹ From installing costly bathroom monitors to redirecting counselor time to deal with the ramifications of addiction, schools are expending significant resources to respond to an industry-created crisis.

An additional — yet often overlooked — consequence of the youth vaping epidemic is the fact that institutions like schools have to deal with increasing amounts of dangerous waste. This waste stream comes from the accumulation of e-cigarette devices, e-liquid containers, and cartridges or “pods” that contain liquid nicotine, and devices that contain lithium ion batteries and other e-waste. The additional burden on public institutions can be overwhelming.



Photo: Jeremiah Mock²

Importantly, under federal law,³ e-cigarette devices, e-liquid containers, and batteries are likely to be⁴ hazardous waste when schools, courts, and airports confiscate and dispose of them. These wastes therefore need to be handled and disposed of in accordance with federal and state laws.

This publication provides a brief summary of considerations for schools, airports, courts, and other institutions subject to the Resource Conservation and Recovery Act (RCRA) when dealing with how to handle and dispose of

POLICIES



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10/29/2025

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BEYOND SCHOOL POLICIES



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4/11/25 - THE NICOTINE WASTE ALLIANCE: A COLLABORATIVE APPROACH TO TACKLE TOBACCO PRODUCT WASTE

We are excited to announce the formation of the Nicotine Waste Alliance, a pioneering working group launched under Minnesota Smoke Free Generation's coalition. This collaborative effort brings together experts from various fields with a shared mission: to develop upstream solutions to the growing problem of tobacco product waste.

WHY FOCUS ON TOBACCO PRODUCT WASTE?

Tobacco product waste is a significant environmental issue often overlooked amid broader discussions on tobacco control. Some alarming facts:

- **Cigarette butts** are the most frequently littered item globally, with an estimated 4.5 trillion discarded each year. These butts contain toxic chemicals that leach into soils and waterways, posing a threat to wildlife and ecosystems.
- **Electronic smoking devices**, or e-cigarettes, contain hazardous components, like batteries, cartridges, and plastic casing. These electronic waste materials often end up in landfills, where they contribute to soil and water pollution.
- The plastic waste from single-use vapes and other tobacco products can take hundreds of years or more to decompose, continuing to impact the environment long after their use.

THE BIRTH OF THE NICOTINE WASTE ALLIANCE

The idea for the Nicotine Waste Alliance arose from an initiative about a statewide single-use vape ban. An environmentalist, concerned about waste from these devices, reached out to our commercial tobacco control experts. The synergy between these groups was immediate, and our discussions, though not resulting in a ban this time, sparked innovative ideas and conversations about addressing tobacco product waste.

UPSTREAM SOLUTIONS



BEYOND SCHOOL POLICIES

- Restrict Flavors
- Enact Broader Smoke-Free and Commercial Tobacco Free Clean Air Policies.
- Raise Price of Products
- Prohibit Discounts and Price Promotions.
- Zone for Distance/Density From Youth Oriented Facilities.
- Cap the Number of Retail Licenses



<https://hhs.iowa.gov/tupc/exposure>



Photo: Getty, [Student Discounts To Help You Save In College – Forbes Advisor](#)

TOBACCO PRODUCT WASTE: TOBACCO RETAILER DENSITY

- Tobacco Retailer Density
 - Targets
 - Low-Income
 - Youth
 - Impacts
 - Disrupts Quit Attempts
 - Exposure



LITIGATION



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10/29/2025

36

**MAYOR AND CITY COUNCIL
OF BALTIMORE**

Plaintiff,

v.

**PHILLIP MORRIS USA, INC.,
R.J. REYNOLDS TOBACCO COMPANY,
LIGGETT GROUP LLC,
AND
THE GEORGE J. FALTER COMPANY**

Defendants.

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IN THE

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CIRCUIT COURT

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FOR

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BALTIMORE CITY

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CASE NO: 24-C-22-004904

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MEMORANDUM OPINION AND COURT ORDER



7/30/25 - BALTIMORE TRIUMPHS IN TOBACCO WASTE LAWSUIT AS COURT ALLOWS CASE TO PROGRESS

In an important legal battle that underscores the intersection of public health and environmental responsibility, the Baltimore City Circuit Court issued a [45-page order and memorandum of law](#) on July 24, 2025, allowing the Mayor and City Council of Baltimore to proceed with their lawsuit against major tobacco companies. The ruling marks a significant victory for public health advocacy. This case sheds light on the detrimental impacts of tobacco product waste, particularly non-biodegradable cigarette filters that have become a prevalent nuisance in our environment.

THE BACKGROUND OF THE CASE

The lawsuit, initiated by Baltimore officials, argues that well-known tobacco companies, including Philip Morris and R.J. Reynolds, are contributing to a public health crisis through the widespread littering of cigarette filters or “butts.” These filters, made from cellulose acetate, do not break down naturally and cause extensive harm to urban landscapes and waterways, leading to significant environmental degradation. The city contends that the burden of cleaning up this toxic waste ultimately falls on local government, straining resources and costing taxpayer dollars.

By alleging violations of environmental health codes, Baltimore’s legal team has opened a debate about corporate responsibility, environmental stewardship, and public health. Baltimore argues that the tobacco industry has a duty to recognize and mitigate the harm caused by its products once they are disposed of improperly.

THE COURT’S RULING

The court denied the tobacco companies’ motions to dismiss, allowing the lawsuit to proceed. The court’s memorandum of law highlights how the city’s claims of design defect, failure to warn, and public nuisance are legally valid. The ruling emphasizes that cigarette waste contributes to

MEET MR. TRASH WHEEL: BALTIMORE HARBOR'S GOOGLY EYED GARBAGE GOBBLER



Photo credit: Mr. Trash Wheel's Website

TURN YOUR TRASH INTO DATA

San Diego State University

Rutgers School of Public Health





RESOURCES



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TOBACCO PRODUCT WASTE

A Public Health and Environmental Toolkit



HAZARDOUS WASTE LAWS & TOBACCO PRODUCT WASTE

What Schools, Businesses, & Others Need to Know



 Tobacco product¹ waste, particularly e-cigarettes and vapes, has become ubiquitous in many communities, largely due to aggressive industry marketing and widespread retail availability. What should schools, businesses, agencies, and other entities do with tobacco product waste that accumulates on their premises?

TOBACCO PRODUCT WASTE & HAZARDOUS WASTE LAWS

What Tobacco Retailers Need to Know



TACKLING TOBACCO PRODUCT WASTE OPTIONS FOR MINNESOTA COMMUNITIES



COMMERCIAL
TOBACCO
POLLUTION

February 2024



TACKLING TOBACCO PRODUCT WASTE

Options for New York State



Tobacco product waste refers to any component, part, or remnant of a commercial tobacco product, including e-cigarettes.¹

This includes waste produced from the use of a tobacco product, such as cigarette butts, cigar tips and wrappers, e-cigarette cartridges, and any packaging and incidental waste such as lighters or matches – regardless of whether it contains tobacco or nicotine. Tobacco product waste is often considered hazardous waste due to the presence of dangerous substances, such as nicotine, toxic metals, chemicals, and lithium-ion batteries in e-cigarettes. This resource describes the problem of tobacco product waste in New York State and presents several possible policy solutions to address the problem.

Overview of Problem

Tobacco product waste is severely destructive to the environment. Cigarette butts are the most littered item on the planet, with approximately



4.5 trillion cigarette butts weighing 850,000 tons² littered each year – roughly thirty times the weight of the Statue of Liberty. Out of 5.7 trillion cigarettes purchased each year, 65 percent are intentionally littered.³ This toxic trash inevitably ends up in waterways, comprising 30 percent of the waste collected from all coasts over the last three decades,⁴ and 19 percent of all marine debris that is collected.⁵

CONSIDERATIONS FOR TRIBAL COMMUNITIES

COMMERCIAL TOBACCO PRODUCT WASTE

Considerations for Tribal Communities



How Sovereign Nations Can Enact Their Own Environmental Protections

Tobacco has been grown and used in the Americas for millennia by indigenous populations for cultural or ceremonial purposes, but widespread use of highly addictive commercial tobacco products,¹ especially cigarettes, is relatively recent, beginning at the end of the 19th century. Since that time, cigarettes and other tobacco products have caused a massive disease epidemic that has led to commercial tobacco control measures. Commercial tobacco does not only impact individuals but it also endangers the health of the environment.² As more recognition is given to environmental justice, the idea of policies to address commercial tobacco product



waste is gaining popularity across the U.S. and in Indian Country. Tribal Nations have sovereign authority to enact laws and regulations to protect their lands from the harms of commercial tobacco product waste.

What is commercial tobacco product waste?

When commercial tobacco products are not properly disposed, residual plastics, heavy metals, nicotine, and other chemicals find their way into our environment, polluting the air, land, and water.

DISCUSSION



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