

Aircraft rescue and fire-fighting training



PHOTO BY FRANCIS CHUNG

A foam truck manned by firefighters from the Joint Base Myer-Henderson Hall Fire & Emergency Medical Services Department extinguishes a fire during an annual aircraft rescue and fire-fighting training exercise at Davison Army Airfield near Fort Belvoir in Fairfax, Va., June 5. Teams of JBM-HH firefighters will be participating in live-burn exercises at the airfield through June 9. See next week's Pentagram for further coverage.

Bin your butts! Littered cigarette butts impact the environment, the economy, you



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Though tossing cigarette butts out the window, into waterways or into planters may not seem like a big deal, littered cigarette butts can have a big impact on the local environment, economy and even your health.

As research on the harmful impacts of this toxic litter has begun to emerge, communities around the country have begun addressing the issue through public awareness campaigns, implementing or increasing fines for littering butts, adding cigarette butt receptacles in public smoking areas, and distributing portable ashtrays.

While some people still don't think of cigarette butts as litter, they are actually one of the worst kinds of litter, as they are non-biodegradable toxic waste. According to a study done by San Diego State University on the toxicity of cigarette butts to marine and freshwater fish, cigarette butts are especially harmful to the environment as they may introduce over 4,000 chemicals to the environment, 69 of which are known carcinogens and many of which are poisonous. Cigarette butts do not easily break down. They stay in the environment for 10 to 15 years, releasing toxic chemicals into the environment as they slowly decompose.

Cigarette butts are the number one most littered item in the U.S., with an estimated 5.6 trillion thrown away

every year. The American Littoral Society has estimated 176 million pounds of cigarette butts are discarded in the U.S. every year., equal to the weight of more than 43,000 average American cars. Some 65 percent of these cigarette butts are littered into the environment.

Cigarette butts discarded in the environment can be picked up by pets, children and wildlife, causing harmful health impacts and even death. Chemicals in the butts can bio-accumulate up the food chain, increasing in concentration as organisms eat other organisms that have ingested the harmful chemicals. As humans are at the top of the food chain, protecting water quality and wildlife is essential to protecting ourselves and our families.

Many people are not aware that the cotton-looking filters in cigarettes are made of microplastics. One solid filter is composed of thousands of plastic fibers that can be released into the environment as the filter breaks down. Microplastics do not biodegrade and when they accumulate in water bodies they harm marine life, which impacts the rest of the ecosystem and, in turn, the economy.

The Virginia Department of Transportation spends \$6.5 million per year of taxpayer money on litter cleanup from roadways, about 38 percent of which is made up of tobacco products. Every time a cigarette butt is tossed out the window, everyone in Virginia is paying for its cleanup. Now that the negative environmental and financial impacts of lit-

tered cigarette butts are becoming well known, the Virginia legislature is considering a bill to classify cigarette butts as litter, which would mean you could get a fine of up to \$5,000 for littering your cigarette butts.

In addition to the taxpayer costs for cleanup, the presence of litter in a community impacts business development, tourism and housing and decreases property values by about 7 percent.

To help, use designated ashtrays or receptacles. If there isn't one right next to you, get some steps in and walk to one!

In fact, try to only smoke in designated smoking areas where you have easy access to cigarette butt receptacles.

Invest in a portable ashtray to keep in your car, pocket or purse. They can range in price from \$2 to \$15 and some are specifically made for cars. They are small enough to carry with you wherever you go. Make sure you empty the ashtray into a proper waste container!

Spread the word. Let your friends and family know that cigarette butts are non-biodegradable toxic waste, and encourage them to use receptacles and portable ashtrays.

Every time you consider doing the easy thing and tossing your cigarette butt on the ground, remember the earth is not your ashtray. Bin your butts. Your community will thank you.

To report conditions that could cause storm water pollution or to get more involved with storm water activities at JBM-HH, call the Environmental Management Division at 703-696-8055.

A Soldier's camera



PHOTO BY FRANCIS CHUNG

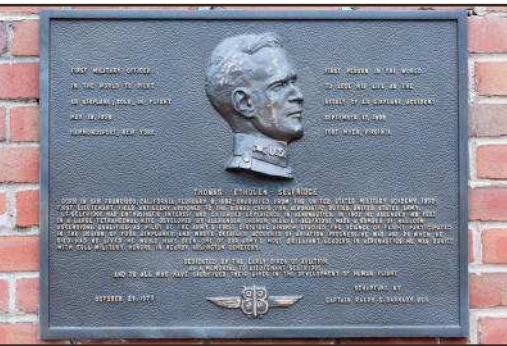


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This Eastman Kodak Vigilant Six-16 camera was used by American service member Bill Bachman to document his travels during World War II. If you know which elite U.S. Army unit Bachman belonged to, and where his camera is currently displayed at Joint Base Myer-Henderson Hall, contact the Pentagram editor at brent.s.wucher.civ@mail.mil. Last week's relief sculpture is featured on a plaque honoring Army 1st Lt. Thomas E. Selfridge, a pioneer of military aviation who lost his life in an airplane crash at Fort Myer in 1908. It is located at the reviewing stand on Summerall Field.