

## Trash Register

The shoulder of I-370 in Maryland is routinely trashed. The litter shown on this page is a small sample of what was found along a 300-foot stretch one July day, which also included a potato chip bag full of half-eaten chicken wings, rain-soaked plastic bags swarming with bugs, dozens of cigarette butts, nails, broken bottles, even chunks of lane striping.

All this litter is a result of heavy commuter traffic and location—near fast-food joints, a construction site, and trash and recycling centers. That's why environmental scientist Steve Stein used I-370 to train staff for a national survey of litter he conducted for the group Keep America Beautiful.

On average, Stein found 704 items for each highway mile, down from 3,289 in the last big U.S. tally, in 1968. He credits the drop to anti-litter campaigns and ongoing cleanup, at a cost of \$11 billion a year. The 2008 survey aims to cut the tab by pushing prevention, like teaching truckers to better secure loads and persuading America's top litterers, males 18 to 24, not to toss beer cans out car windows. —Marc Silver



### TYPES OF TRASH

- 1 Much litter seems unintentional: a furniture leg, a cord, a remnant of a cell phone, a ball.
- 2 Tire tread, known as "road alligator," can cause a crash.
- 3 Cigars and cigarettes leak toxic chemicals into watersheds.
- 4 Drink cans accumulate unless a state has deposit laws.
- 5 Unsecured boxes fly off trash trucks.
- 6 Snack debris piles up on exit ramps: Speeds are slower; drivers think cops aren't watching.