

WHERE DOES MARINE LITTER COME FROM?

Any trash that is improperly disposed of, as well as any materials that are improperly transported or stored, have the potential to become marine litter.

Marine litter comes mainly from land based practices, such as:

- inappropriate waste disposal at home.
- inadequate waste management at all stages: collection, transportation, treatment and final disposal.
- discharge of untreated municipal sewage, either due to the lack of treatment plants or due to heavy storms.
- irresponsibly discharged industrial waste which may contain e.g. scrap from the production process, packaging or raw material, plastic resin pellets, as well as untreated wastewater.
- tourism and recreational activities that fill beaches with cigarette butts, plastic bags, food packaging, beverage cans, cartons and toys... Many beach goers leave behind much more than their footprints in the sand...

Litter from land sources finds its way to the sea via rivers, drains, sewage outlets, storm water outflows or when blown by winds, or even swept with the tide.

As well as sea based activities, such as:

- commercial fishing that disposes of fishing related waste (fishing gear, nets, etc.), litter accidentally caught in their nets, etc.
- merchant and leisure shipping (large cargo ships, cruise liners, ferries, etc.) that disposes of sewage, lost cargo holds, etc.
- recreational shipping (small boats used e.g. for fishing, yachting and water sports) that disposes of sewage, fishing and sports gear, etc.
- offshore oil and gas platforms that dispose of drilling equipment, pipes, storage drums, packaging items, etc.
- fisheries that dispose of net cages, construction material, feed sacks, etc.

Moreover, litter produced on board often ends up in the sea. Inadequate management facilities on ships, in ports and marinas make the problem worse.

The root causes of marine litter have to do with the prevailing production and consumption patterns (the more we consume, the more waste we produce) as well as with our indifferent attitudes!