

FLEX IMPACT: A GUIDE TO PLANNING A LITTER CLEANUP

Hosted by FPA's Environmental,
Health, and Safety Committee (EHS)





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Overview

OVERVIEW & BACKGROUND

FPA FlexImpact is a new initiative from the Flexible Packaging Association (FPA) designed to highlight how our industry can make a positive difference in the environment and the communities where we live and work. Each FPA FlexImpact event will focus on flexible packaging's role in protecting products, reducing waste, and supporting healthier, safer communities.

The inaugural FPA FlexImpact event will launch in November 2025 with a coordinated community cleanup—held during the FlexForward® Conference in New Orleans and mirrored by satellite cleanups hosted by FPA member companies nationwide.

To support these member-led efforts, FPA has adapted this toolkit from a resource originally developed by our peers at PLASTICS FLiP. The toolkit offers practical guidance and resources to help plan, organize, and execute successful cleanup events that reduce mismanaged waste and demonstrate our industry's shared commitment to environmental stewardship.

Within the toolkit, you will find:

- A step-by-step checklist of how to plan a cleanup event and what is needed on-site
- Best practices for finding a local partner organization
- Marketing materials
- Sample waiver and sign-up sheet
- How to track and dispose of the items you have collected
- Options for enhancing your cleanup event

On behalf of FPA FlexImpact and the FPA Environmental, Health, and Safety (EHS) Committee, thank you for your commitment to protecting our environment and helping ensure that plastic films are properly managed within our communities.

Let's get started!

Questions?

Please contact Kyla Fisher, Director of Regulatory Affairs and Sustainability at FPA. For more information about FPA FlexImpact, please email kfisher@flexpack.org.



Checklist

CHECKLIST FOR PLANNING A CLEANUP

Choosing a Time, Date, and Location

For cleanup planning, consider your volunteers' commitment times, their physical abilities and comfort levels, as well as the weather, sunrise and sunset times, transportation arrangements, and proximity to restroom facilities. Some high-risk areas for litter include parks, nature trails, roadsides, and waterways such as streams, rivers, lakes, and beaches.

It is also advised to be aware of people experiencing homelessness who might be living in the area you plan to cleanup. Be respectful of everyone's personal space. Avoid overcrowding and refrain from touching anyone's personal belongings.

If you aren't already aware of an area that needs cleaning up, it can be helpful to contact a local organization such as your local [Keep America Beautiful Affiliate](#) or Parks and Recreation Department.

It is recommended that you visit the site once before your cleanup event to ensure that it is a safe area, that there is, in fact, litter for your group to pick up, and to note any other possible logistical challenges.



Finding a Partner Organization

Coordinating with a local organization that regularly hosts cleanup events can be highly beneficial. To find a partner organization:

- Search for your local [Keep America Beautiful Affiliate](#).
- Contact your local Parks and Recreation Department.
 - You can often find their website or contact information by searching “parks and recreation department in [insert your city name]”.
- Googling “litter cleanup near me” can often lead you to other local organizations that host cleanup events.
- There is also the option to join a cleanup hosted by others by searching on the [National Cleanup Day](#) website or the [International Coastal Cleanup](#) website.

If you choose to partner with an external organization, some things they may be able to help you with are:

- Scouting a location in need of cleaning up.
- Providing you with equipment for your volunteers to use during the cleanup.
 - i.e., trash bags, waste pickers, gloves, vests
- Weighing and recording your collected items.
- Connecting you with a waste management company to take away your collected trash and recyclables.
- Providing advice on what types of potentially harmful plants or animals to watch out for in your area.

Event Preparation Checklist

Waivers & Sign-Ups

- Bring a **sign-up sheet** and **multiple printed copies of waivers** for volunteers to sign. Digital forms are also acceptable and can be distributed ahead of time for efficiency.
- These forms are critical for liability protection and volunteer security. Samples are provided in the [Appendix](#).
- Even if you collect waivers digitally, **bring extra copies on-site** for any last-minute participants.

Supplies & Equipment

- **Trash and recycling bags** to collect litter.
- **Protective gloves** for safe handling.
- **Trash “grabbers”** and a **hanging scale** to weigh bags (for example, [this one on Amazon](#)).
 - If you don’t have a scale, use the **15 lbs per trash bag** standard estimate.
 - The [Clean Swell](#) App automatically tracks estimated weight as you log collected items.
 - Note: It can be difficult to capture every individual item while cleaning, so totals are approximations.
 - See more information on tracking, recording, and disposing of collected items on next page.

Safety & Emergency Kit

Recommended items include:

- First aid kit
- Bug repellent and bug-bite relief cream
- Sunscreen
- Advil or Tylenol
- Hand sanitizer or wipes
- Water and snacks

Dress Code

- Volunteers should wear **long pants and long sleeves** when possible, but adjust for weather to avoid overheating or discomfort.
- **Thick gardening gloves** are strongly recommended to protect hands from sharp objects or irritant plants (e.g., pricker bushes or poison ivy).
- **Closed-toe shoes** are essential for all participants.
- If working near or in waterways, consider **water shoes or waders**.



Welcoming Remarks / Housekeeping

Once you arrive at the cleanup site, it's a good idea for the event leader to give welcoming remarks to the volunteer group. Thank everyone who helped plan and volunteered for the cleanup, and share why the project was started, emphasizing the importance of giving back to the community.

Housekeeping items such as the “Dos and Don'ts” listed below, other safety reminders, and information on how to track collected items and where to bring full trash bags should also be addressed. If you're working with a partner organization, have them introduce their work to the group and discuss any additional safety concerns they consider important.

Tracking, Recording, and Disposing of Collected Items

Understanding what litter ends up in our environment—and how it gets there—is essential to creating meaningful change. Around the world, numerous efforts are underway to track litter so we can better understand human behavior, identify the most frequently littered items, and determine how to prevent mismanaged waste in the first place.

As part of this global effort, FPA plans to release an Impact Report at the conclusion of this activity and to track our collective progress over time. Your data will help FPA demonstrate how the flexible packaging industry is contributing to cleaner communities and responsible material management.

We are asking each participating team to document:

- Where cleanups occurred
- How much material was collected
- What types of materials were found

To make this easy, you can use the [Clean Swell](#) or [Litterati](#) apps to track items as you collect them, or use the tracking sheets in the [Appendix](#) if you prefer a non-digital option.

Why Measuring Matters

Tracking and recording the types and amounts of collected materials provides more than numbers—it tells a story. By understanding which products are most common in the environment and how they arrived there, we can turn this information into actionable insights that support stronger waste management infrastructure, targeted education, and evidence-based advocacy.

Tracking as you go can also help with sorting recyclables and non-recyclables into separate bags. Alternatively, you can collect everything in one bag and tally afterward—just take care when handling sharp or contaminated items.

How to Measure

- Use a portable luggage scale (such as this example on [Amazon](#)) to weigh bags after your cleanup.
- If no scale is available, use a standard conversion of 15 pounds per full trash bag to estimate the total.
- The [Clean Swell](#) app can automatically estimate weight as you log items.

Note: It's often difficult to capture every single item during a cleanup, so approximate counts and weights are acceptable.

Once your event concludes, please send your summary data to Kyla Fisher, kfisher@flexpack.org.

Proper Disposal & End-of-Life Management

After items are removed from the environment, they must be sent to the appropriate disposal or recycling facility. Before hosting your cleanup, make sure you have a plan for where collected materials will go next.

- Coordinate with your partner organization or local waste management and recycling facilities to confirm drop-off or pick-up options.
- Many recyclers can be found [online](#), or your local curbside waste provider may be able to assist directly.
- Check with your local municipality for specific guidance on items such as batteries, electronics, tires, or paint, which require special handling.

Enhancing Your Cleanup Event

- Open the event with welcoming remarks about the purpose of the event, thank your volunteers for their participation, ensure everyone has a “buddy” and knows where to find safety/emergency items, cleanup equipment, and the closest hygiene facilities.
- Take pictures!
 - Share your cleanup on social media & tag FPA on [Twitter](#), [LinkedIn](#), [Facebook](#), and [Instagram](#). FPA will engage with your posts and help amplify your efforts to highlight the industry's collective impact.
 - Use a hashtag, such as: #FPAFlexImpact, #FlexImpactCleanup, #CommunityImpact, #FlexImpactCommunityImpact
- Create T-shirts for the event or plan for everyone to wear your company color; bright colors are a good idea that can also enhance group safety.
- “Gamify” the event by making it a competition among different groups.
 - See which group can collect the largest volume, the most specified material or product, the strangest item, etc.
- Reward your volunteers: consider hiring a food truck, taking everyone to a restaurant or brewery afterwards, or giving each volunteer a small individual gift. Your volunteers put a lot of effort into helping you make a difference in the community. Celebrate a job well done!
- Consider reaching out to your local council members, state representatives, and community media to share news of your cleanup. Your efforts deserve recognition—and highlighting them helps raise awareness about the industry's commitment to environmental stewardship.





Do's and Don'ts

Provided by
[Asheville GreenWorks](#), [National Cleanup Day](#), and [Ocean Conservancy](#)

Remember to:

- Visit the cleanup site in advance to identify safety and logistics considerations.
- Determine where to set up a check-in station and identify the areas that volunteers will clean.
- Take BEFORE, DURING, and AFTER photos to highlight your work.
- Use the “buddy system” and work in teams of two or three to maximize safety.
- Have one person per group be your “designated data recorder.”
 - This person should be aware of potential safety risks, including touching trash and then touching a phone, notebook, clipboard, etc.
- Drink plenty of fluids and keep “quick energy foods” on hand.
- Take occasional breaks.
- Be aware of your surroundings and the potential hazards associated with them (e.g., passing cars, tree branches, poison ivy, etc.).
- Wash your hands after the cleanup. Any gear used during a cleanup, such as litter grabbers, reusable gloves, or buckets, should also be sanitized immediately after the event.
- Keep track of where you leave bags for a speedy pickup.
- Contact your local [Fish and Wildlife Service](#) office if you encounter any dead, entangled, or injured wildlife. Be sure to leave any wildlife handling to the experts.

Don't:

- Don't pick up hazardous materials such as hypodermic needles, sharp objects, old car batteries, condoms, animal carcasses, or other unidentified, questionable objects.
- Don't overstuff bags or carry torn bags, as they are likely to burst.
- Don't attempt to move large objects such as rusted car shells, old household appliances, or swing sets.
 - Call your local fire or police department to report illegal dumping and for instructions on how to proceed with items that are too large to dispose of in your trash and recycling bags.
- Don't bring pets to the event, as they may distract participants or even detract from the cleanup!
- Don't overdo it physically; listen to your body and take care of yourself. You want your volunteers to be able to enjoy the good work they are doing!
- Don't leave bags far from the road or in hard-to-reach areas.
- Don't go too close to the road: stay several feet away from the edge of the road unless you have checked to make sure no cars are nearby.

Marketing Toolkit

Recruiting Volunteers

- Share your cleanup event with your coworkers and community members!
 - Announce in all-staff meetings, post on company or community bulletin boards, and send a company-wide email.
 - Include information such as time, date, location, transportation, what to expect, dress code, and what to bring.
- Hold an orientation before volunteers arrive on-site to ensure they know what to expect and what to wear/bring. This can be done virtually.

Getting the Word Out

- Promote your event via social media and your company website.
- Take photos before, during, and after your event to share progress on social media and your website.
- Include a hashtag for all to use on social media. Examples include:
 - #FPAFlexImpact
 - #FlexImpactCleanup
 - #CommunityImpact
 - #FlexImpactCommunityImpact
- Set a goal for the weight or number of bags collected.
- You may need to have one cleanup under your belt to determine a baseline, but setting reach goals can also be a good way to motivate volunteers!
- Report your cleanup on [Litterati](#) app, [Clean Swell](#) app, [National Cleanup Day](#) website, or [International Coastal Cleanup Day](#) website.
- Publish a press release to post on your website and local media. A press release template is included in the [Appendix](#).

Share your story with us so we can promote it on our platforms. Tag us!



LinkedIn | [Flexible Packaging Association](#)



X | [@FlexPackOrg](#)



Facebook | [@thepfectpackaging](#)



Instagram | [@thepfectpackaging](#)



Press Email | communications@flexpack.org

Share your story and posts with this email address for possible features in *FlexPack VOICE*®, the FPA newsletter, or the Perfect Packaging blog!



Appendix

Sample Press Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

[Date]

CONTACT: [contact name and email address]

Headline

[City, State]—With the guidance of the Flexible Packaging Association’s FlexImpact, [Company Name] hosted a cleanup in [location] on [date].

A group of [number of participants] volunteers gathered at [location of cleanup] motivated to make a difference and remove mismanaged waste from the environment. The event began with opening remarks from [event organizer / whomever opened the event], who emphasized the importance of giving back to the community through waste cleanups.

The event was held in collaboration with [insert organization and link here], who are dedicated to [insert mission statement or sentence here].

The volunteers were able to collect [stats about the amount of litter collected].

[Include quote from event organizer or participants about their experience with the cleanup / the purpose of the cleanup, etc.]

The flexible packaging industry is committed to environmental solutions that support a circular economy: we love flexible packaging but hate plastic waste. [Organization name] expressed sincere gratitude for the volunteers who dedicated their time to picking up not only mismanaged plastic, but also metal, paper, and glass litter as well. Cleanup participants expressed pride in the impact made during the event and look forward to future cleanup efforts.

[Attach images from the event]

Sample Sign-Up Form

All volunteers participating in an organized group on an episodic volunteer project on a unit of a public land agency must sign up using this form. By signing this form, you agree to the terms of the project as defined in the attached Waiver and affirmed by the Host Organization. Volunteers under age 18 must complete a waiver that is signed by their parent or guardian. Please indicate your willingness (yes) or unwillingness (no) for the Host Organization to use your photograph, video, or audio in performance of volunteer duties.

Volunteer Number	Volunteer Name <i>(First and Last)</i>	Phone Number	Email Address	Photo Release <i>(Yes or No)</i>
1				
2				
3				
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Waiver Template

Disclaimer: This waiver is provided in good faith by the Flexible Packaging Association. We recommend that you always check with your legal counsel before administering this waiver to ensure its relevance and coverage for your specific event.

I am working as a volunteer with [Enter Company Name], hereby referred to as "Company". I am doing so for the consideration of helping to cleanup the environment and the pride it provides. When I am participating in this volunteer program, I agree to cooperate promptly and fully with all directions of leaders of this volunteer effort. I agree to follow all rules and regulations set by Company and all applicable City, State, and Federal laws, rules, and regulations.

I understand the nature of the activities that I will be involved in, including participating in the various types of activities hosted by Company, including, but not limited to walking in uneven terrain, litter pick up, and debris removal.

I represent that I am physically healthy and that I do not have a medical condition that would restrict me from participating in these types of physical activities. I acknowledge that there are risks associated with physical activities of this nature. I hereby assume all dangers and risks associated therewith.

I understand that I am responsible for my own behavior and agree that I will only perform tasks that I feel comfortable and safe doing, and that I am medically and physically capable of doing. I understand that I either need no accommodations to participate or that I have a duty to inform Company of the need for accommodations. I understand it is my responsibility to safely travel to and from the volunteer site and shall not hold Company responsible for any injury I might sustain as a result of my travel to and from the volunteer site. In the event that I am transported by vehicle to a volunteer site, I agree to wear my seatbelt and follow all recommended safety precautions.

In partial consideration of my acceptance as a participant in this volunteer program, I hereby agree to waive all claims I have or may have against Company and Association in relation to volunteer programs and agree to release and hold harmless Company and Association along with their respective employees, agents, affiliates, or other representatives from all claims for all expenses, personal injury, loss, or damages incurred during or in connection to my participating in this volunteer program including the negligence of any other volunteers. This release of liability covers all risks of the activity and any negligence of Company, Association, or Company affiliates.

By Signing this Agreement, you agree that you have carefully read and fully understand all the provisions in this Release and are freely, knowingly, and voluntarily entering into this Release. You represent that you are above 18 years of age.

ACKNOWLEDGED AND AGREED

Participant Signature: _____ Date: _____

Printed Name: _____

Sample Collected Items Tally Sheet

Provided by [International Coastal Cleanup](#)

Thank you for taking part in an FPA FlexImpact Cleanup! To help capture the collective results of our efforts, please complete this form and return it to Kyla Fisher, kfisher@flexpack.org. The form can be filled out by a group lead on behalf of your team, or by pairs of volunteers as they fill their bags—then submitted together at the end of your cleanup.

Your data will contribute to Ocean Conservancy's citizen science initiative to track litter worldwide and will also help FPA create our own FPA FlexImpact Report measuring the industry's positive environmental impact. If you're using a litter tracking app such as [Clean Swell](#), please screenshot your summary data and send it to Kyla along with this form.

Ocean and waterway trash ranks as one of the most serious pollution problems choking our planet. Far more than an eyesore, a rising tide of marine debris threatens human health, wildlife, communities and economies around the world. The ocean faces many challenges, but trash should not be one of them. Ocean trash is entirely preventable, and data you collect are part of the solution. The International Coastal Cleanup is the world's largest volunteer effort on behalf of ocean and waterway health.

HERE IS HOW IT WORKS:



NAME: _____ EMAIL: _____

CLEANUP SITE DESCRIPTION

Type of Environment (choose one): <input type="radio"/> Saltwater (Ocean/Bay/Estuary) <input type="radio"/> Freshwater (River/Stream/Lake) <input type="radio"/> Inland (No Water Body Present)	Mode of Data Collection (choose one): <input type="radio"/> Land (beach, shoreline or inland) <input type="radio"/> Underwater <input type="radio"/> Watercraft (powerboat, sailboat, kayak or canoe)
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SITE INFORMATION:

Cleanup Site Name: _____	Zone or County: _____	NUMBER OF VOLUNTEERS WORKING ON THIS CARD: adults: <input type="text"/> children (under 12): <input type="text"/>
State or Province: _____	Nearest Crossroad or Landmark: _____	
Country: _____	DATE OF CLEANUP: _____	
MOST UNUSUAL ITEM COLLECTED: _____		

GO PAPERLESS!
Collect and record your data on **Clean Swell!**
Download the free app on your mobile device.

Available on the App Store | GET IT ON Google Play

Please return this form to your area coordinator.
If you are unable to do so, please mail or email it to:
Ocean Conservancy
Attn: International Coastal Cleanup
1300 19th Street, NW, 8th Floor, Washington, DC 20036
cleanup@oceanconservancy.org
Trash Free Seas: www.oceanconservancy.org/cleanup
Be a Green Boater: www.oceanconservancy.org/goodmate
Sponsors: www.oceanconservancy.org/cleanupsponsors
Clean Swell: www.oceanconservancy.org/cleanswell



TRASH COLLECTED

Citizen scientist: Pick up all trash and record all items you find below. No matter how small the items, the data you collect are important for Trash Free Seas®.

EXAMPLE:

Plastic Bags:  = **8**

TOTAL #

Please DO NOT use words or check marks. Only **numbers** are useful data.

MOST LIKELY TO FIND ITEMS:

Grocery bags (plastic):	=	Cups, plates (foam):	=
Other bags (plastic):	=	Cups, plates (paper):	=
Beverage bottles (glass):	=	Cups, plates (plastic):	=
Beverage bottles (plastic):	=	Food containers (foam):	=
Beverage cans:	=	Food containers (plastic):	=
Beverage sachets/pouches:	=	Food wrappers (candy, chips, etc.):	=
Bottle caps (metal):	=	Lids (plastic):	=
Bottle caps (plastic):	=	Straws/stirrers (plastic):	=
Cigarette butts:	=	Utensils (plastic):	=

FISHING & BOATING:

Line, nets, traps, rope, etc.:	=	Appliances:	=
Foam dock pieces:	=	Construction materials:	=

PACKAGING MATERIAL:

6-pack holders:	=	Tires:	=
Foam packaging:	=		=
Other plastic bottles (oil, bleach, etc.):	=		=
Strapping bands:	=		=

PERSONAL HYGIENE:

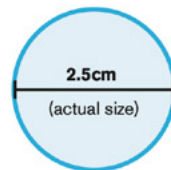
Condoms:	=	Electronic waste (phones, batteries):	=
Cotton bud sticks (swabs):	=	Footwear (shoes/slippers):	=
Diapers:	=	Paper bags:	=
Gloves & masks (PPE):	=	Tobacco products (lighters, cigar tips, wrap):	=
Syringes:	=	Toys:	=
Tampons & applicators:	=	Other plastic waste:	=
	=	Other waste (metal, paper, etc.):	=

OTHER ITEMS NOT LISTED:

1.	=	TINY TRASH LESS THAN 2.5CM	=
2.	=	Plastic/foam pieces:	=
3.	=		=
4.	=		=
5.	=		=

DEAD/INJURED ANIMAL

Type of animal:	
Status: dead/injured	Entangled: yes/no
Type of entanglement item:	



CLEANUP SUMMARY (circle units)

Number of Trash Bags Filled:	<input type="text"/>	Weight of Trash Collected:	<input type="text"/> lbs/kgs	Distance Cleaned:	<input type="text"/> miles/km	Area Cleaned:	<input type="text"/> miles ² /km ²
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