



## **“Adopt-a-...” Program Information and Checklist**

The Adopt-a- program is designed to help clean and beautify roadways throughout a city or county. By facilitating trash removal from roadways, parks, or other public properties, volunteers are beginning the process of changing people’s attitudes about litter. Public places may be littered because few people feel ownership of the property, leaving it dirty or throwing trash on the roadways. It costs millions of dollars annually to clean roads in the United States. Volunteer groups participating in the program save the taxpayers approximately \$250 per mile cleaned, which translates into thousands of dollars saved. By adopting a roadway, civic and other nonprofit organizations help to generate pride in their community and create economic benefits for all citizens.

### **HOW TO GET STARTED**

The first step is to decide what needs to be cleaned, i.e. roads, parks, railroad right-of-way, or other public property. This step is important both in determining the name of the program and the person/agency to contact for approval. If you decide to clean up county roads only, the program might be called Adopt-a-County Road. If you want to allow adoption of numerous types of properties, then Adopt-a-Spot or Adopt-a-Space may be appropriate.

Next step, government support and approval will be needed for volunteers to work on public property. If you are working with a county, the County Commissioner’s approval will be needed. If city parks or streets are the target, then City Council or Commission approval is needed. When requesting approval, some basic items will be needed for an effective program to start:

- Signs for adopters – typically two per group
- Safety vests
- Trash bags
- Funds for promotion or advertisement - optional but beneficial
- Funds to copy applications and safety information
- Funds for files and/or staff to maintain files

The organizers must decide how frequently the collection will be done. Participants agree to clean their adopted area at least four times a year for two years, six times a year for one year, or whatever combination you choose.

Organizers need to determine where the trash bags will be go and who will pick them up. Will an employee of the government pick up the bags that are left by volunteers? Will the responsibility be included in the contract for solid waste services? Will volunteers be required to take the filled bags to a designated location?

Once you have determined the basic structure, you may use the sample form attached to sign up volunteers. For additional information on organizing cleanup events, please contact Keep Texas Beautiful.

## ***FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS BY POTENTIAL ADOPTERS:***

### ***Recruiting volunteers - How many people does a group need?***

As many as it takes. We recommend you involve enough people so that the pickups are manageable. Some individuals have made solo adoptions and are comfortable picking up an area by themselves.

### ***Is it difficult to keep the roadsides clean?***

That depends largely on the traffic volume, the location of the road, the size of your group, and the frequency of your pickups. Most report that their pickups are not particularly taxing, but if you're an individual who has adopted a highly traveled road on the way to a landfill, you may have your work cut out for you.

### ***What's in it for me?***

With your name on a sign, you'll be recognized as a community member who takes action. You will receive full support in achieving clean roadsides, not only with a supply of bags and vests, but also by having a friendly ear at your local government office. You will also be part of an effort that was pioneered right here in Texas.

### ***How does the actual cleanup work? What should we do with our bags?***

Start by setting a date and time convenient for all who want to participate. Be sure that the pickup is during daylight hours and avoid rush hour. Gather the group together before passing out the safety vests and orange bags. Check to see that everyone has gloves and closed-toe shoes. Then take a few minutes to review basic safety issues. At that point, you should be ready to start bagging trash.

When the pickup is completed, try to gather the bags in one or two places. If groups are not able to remove the collected trash, they should notify the local county office before a pickup, so that removal of the bags can be scheduled for the following workday. In either case, be sure to report the number of participants and bags collected to the coordinator.

### ***How often are we supposed to clean our roadside?***

At a minimum, as often as required by the contract - but some groups pick up more frequently. If you conduct the pickups at regular intervals, you can get a sense of how much littering is done over a period of time, and then adjust your schedule to keep pace.

### ***Can a sign say whatever we want?***

No. Signs are generally for the name of those conducting the cleanups. The intention is to recognize the organization or business, not your message.

***Is it okay to advertise our business by adopting a highway?***

Yes. However, business names on signs need to be the actual name of the business with no additional advertising information. For example: 'B.J. Smith, A Tree-Cutting Service' is not acceptable if 'A Tree-Cutting Service' is not part of the business name.

***How much of a difference does adopting make?***

Adopt-a-Highway volunteers clean more than 14,000 miles of highways. The maintenance cost per mile for Adopt-a-Highway roads is about \$40 annually, versus \$196 per mile for contracted maintenance. Research has shown that Adopt-a-Highway roadsides are less littered than highways maintained by road crews. Children and young adults who pick up litter with family and friends learn valuable lessons that can lead to life-long environmental awareness. Seeing volunteers at work along the road often makes motorists think twice before carelessly discarding their trash.

**RESPONSIBILITIES**

***ADOPTER/ORGANIZATION RESPONSIBILITIES***

Group supervisor must attend safety training prior to the first cleanup.

Adhere to all Safety Rules and Regulations.

Complete at least two cleanups of the entire adopted area per year. Schedule each cleanup at least two weeks prior to clean-up date.

Obtain safety vests and trash bags at designated facility.

Return safety vests and unused trash bags to designated facility(s) within two working days after completion of cleanup.

***COUNTY/CITY RESPONSIBILITIES***

Approve roadway selection based on traffic volumes, speeds, and shoulder widths.

Provide safety training and written safety rules and regulations to organization's supervisor for distribution to program participants.

Supply safety vests and trash bags for use by volunteer organizations.

Remove filled trash bags from roadside and dispose of properly.

Erect signs identifying the name of volunteer organization.

The government reserves the right to approve, disapprove, and/or edit names or acronyms on the signs.

## **SAFETY RULES AND REGULATIONS**

- Safety of the volunteers is the number one priority of the program. All volunteers must receive proper safety training prior to arriving at the job site to perform any cleanup activities. The following guidelines are designed to help ensure the safety of each volunteer and must be adhered to at all times.
- All participants must be at least 14 years of age. For every 10 teenagers participating, there must be one adult supervisor at least 21 years of age.
- Cleanup activities must be scheduled through the coordinator and must be performed only in daylight hours *and* during good weather conditions.
- Supervisors of both adult and youth groups should be assigned prior to the cleanup.
- Participants should assemble away from the designated work site and carpool to reduce the number of cars at the litter pick-up site. Vehicles must be parked at least four feet away from the roadway.
- Large groups of 15 or more should be divided into two groups, with one group on each side of the roadway. Individuals must remain with the group to which they are assigned.
- Wear appropriate attire, including boots or hard-soled shoes (no sandals), comfortable clothes, gloves and, hats.
- Safety vests must be worn by all participants at all times during the litter pick-up project.
- Assure that first-aid kits are available. It is recommended that at least one person is experienced in administering first aid and CPR and that transportation is available to the nearest medical facility.
- Work as a group facing oncoming traffic at all times.
- Assure that water is available and in sufficient quantity to meet your group's needs.
- Alcoholic beverages are strictly prohibited. Anyone under the influence of alcohol or narcotics shall be asked to leave the work site.
- Do not cross the roadway unnecessarily. Volunteers should cross only at the designated locations that the supervisor has determined prior to starting work.
- Utility installations, culverts, and drainage structures are off-limits. Do not remove litter from these areas.
- Use caution when you encounter the following: cactus, animals, steep slopes, sharp rocks, insects, barbed wire, traffic, and other unusual circumstances.
- Do not pick up hazardous materials such as car batteries, animal carcasses, discarded chemical containers, or any object that appears questionable. Report these materials to your supervisor.
- Do not distract motorists with horseplay or abrupt, erratic movements. Horseplay of any kind is strictly forbidden. The roadways are potentially very dangerous.
- When lifting objects use correct lifting techniques, keeping your back as straight as possible. Keep the object you are trying to lift close to your body and let your legs do the work. Do not attempt to lift heavy objects that two of you can not reasonably lift.

## Adopt-a- \_\_\_\_ Program Terms and Adoption Agreement

The Adopt-a-\_\_\_\_ Program gives civic-minded individuals, organizations, and businesses the opportunity to participate in creating a cleaner, more beautiful community.

By signing this **Adoption Agreement**, the volunteer(s), both jointly and severally, acknowledge the potentially hazardous nature of the work to be performed, and both jointly and severally, agree to the Program Terms listed below.

### Volunteer Responsibilities

- ◆ Group supervisor must attend safety training prior to the first cleanup.
- ◆ Adhere to all Safety Rules and Regulations.
- ◆ Complete at least \_\_\_\_ cleanups of entire adopted roadway per year.
- ◆ Place collected trash in designated location.
- ◆ Obtain safety vests and trash bags at designated facility.
- ◆ Return safety vests and unused trash bags to designated facility within two working days after cleanup completion.

### City/County Responsibilities:

- ◆ Approve roadway selection based on traffic volumes, speeds, and shoulder widths.
- ◆ Provide safety training and safety rules and regulations to organization's group supervisor for distribution to program participants.
- ◆ Supply safety vests and trash bags for use by volunteer organizations.
- ◆ Remove filled trash bags from roadside and dispose of properly.
- ◆ Erect signs identifying the name of volunteer organization.
- ◆ Government reserves the right to approve, disapprove, and/or edit names or acronyms on the signs.

On this \_\_\_\_\_ day of \_\_\_\_\_ 20\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_ having an interest in the appearance of the \_\_\_\_\_ community and recognizing the need and the desirability for a litter-free city, agree to adopt \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_.

I/we agree to pick up litter at my/our adopted area and promote a litter-free environment in the community for the period of **January 1, 20\_\_ to December 31, 20\_\_**. This is an annual agreement that, subject to the approval of the coordinator, must be renewed annually to exist. If I/we do not renew my/our agreement within 30 days of the expiration of the agreement, the Adopt-a-\_\_\_\_\_ signs will be removed and the area placed for re-adoption.

I/we agree that if the maintenance of my/our adopted area is not being performed according to the terms agreed upon, I/we will be given thirty (30) days notice of termination after which time the Adopt-a-\_\_\_\_\_ signs will be removed and the spot placed for re-adoption. If within this 30-day period of time the maintenance is resumed, the Agreement will be continued.

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**Name of Adopter**

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**Contact Name**

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**Mailing Address**

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**Phone**

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**Email**

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**Authorized Representative's Signature/Title**

**Government Contact Information**

Address  
Phone