

Illegal Dumping Across PA in 2020

A Summary of Illegal Dump Reporting to Keep Pennsylvania Beautiful

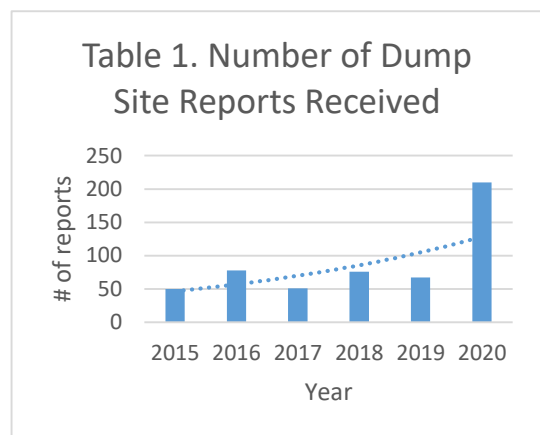
The Illegal Dump Free PA Program is a community-based illegal dump enforcement support program that provides communities with surveillance equipment, deterrents and education tools to address illegal dumping within their community. Illegal Dump Free PA also offers an option for the public to report illegal dumping. Once these reports are received, Keep Pennsylvania Beautiful (KPB) forwards them to the respective property oversight or appropriate enforcement agency for abatement.

Frequency of Reports

In 2020, the 210 illegal dumps reported was a significant increase of 213% over last year (Table 1). The reports identified illegal dumpsites in 50 of Pennsylvania's 67 counties.

- Nineteen sites are located on state park, state forest or game lands.
- Graffiti was added as a category in 2020 and was reported at 19 dumpsites.

In 2019, KPB received 67 reports in 26 different counties. The number of reports was approximately 12% lower than 2018 (76 reports), but in line with the 5-year average of 64 reports per year for 2015 to 2019. There were 3 reports for sites in state parks, forest or game lands.



The pattern was similar in 2018 when KPB received a slightly higher number of reports, 76, but that is still near the 5-year average of 64 reports per year from 2015 to 2019. Reports came from 30 different counties, which is similar to 2019, as well. There were 2 reports for sites in state parks, forest or game lands.

KPB believes the increase in illegal dumping could be a result of the following:

- Temporary suspension of trash hauling, recycling services and special collections of electronics, tires and appliances in the spring and early summer due to the novel coronavirus (COVID-19).
- More people spending time outdoors and visiting remote areas, where dumping is more likely to occur.
- Increased awareness of the dumpsite reporting form as a result of increased promotion.

KPB has found through experience that many residents do not understand waste and recycling collection rules, therefore would likely be unable to identify changes that may have resulted from COVID-19. However, in 2020, KPB attempted to collect information related to changes to trash and recycling collection due to COVID-19 as part of its reporting forms.

While many respondents responded, KPB does not consider these responses representative or conclusive. Most respondents did not fully answer the question, hadn't seen changes, or didn't know if

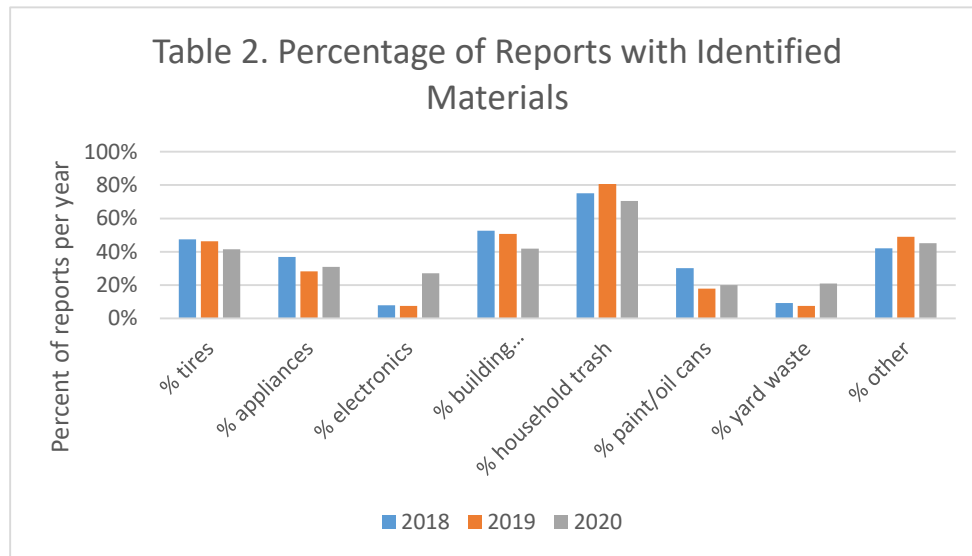
there were changes (such as those who didn't live in the site's municipality). Of those that did answer the question:

- 12 reports stated collections had been impacted,
- 12 reports stated they either had little or no municipal collection or the items found at the site required payment for disposal (such as tires or electronics), and
- Several other reports stated that the site had been an ongoing issue for years that had gotten worse recently.

Most Commonly Identified Materials: Household Trash, Building Materials, and Tires

Household trash was the most commonly reported item reported at 70% of sites in 2020, followed by building materials from renovations and constructions (42%), and vehicle tires (41%). Similarly, in 2019 the most commonly reported item was household trash, which was found at 81% of sites, followed by building materials (51%) and tires at (46%). In 2018 the types of trash reports also followed the same pattern: household trash was again the most frequent at 75% of sites, building materials at 53% and tires at 47%. See Table 2.

Unfortunately, even though household trash, building materials, and tires have been the most common, they are by no means the only items found in dumpsites. Found in lower but still significant numbers during all years were: appliances, paint or oil cans, yard waste (brush, leaves, grass, etc.), and electronics (most mentioned were TVs, but also microwaves, etc.). There were also items that didn't fit the categories on the report form such as furniture, deer carcasses, clothing and toys, to name a few.



Even though we cannot state definitively that the higher number of reports was solely due to COVID-19, through anecdotal comments on the report forms and elsewhere, we do know COVID-19 did cause disruptions to trash collection as well as larger socio-economic effects. Regardless of what drove the higher number of reports in 2020, the types of trash remains consistent over the years. It's also important to remember that all of this data is self-reported by the public and it is not a complete picture of dumping in Pennsylvania. However, it still shows important trends in how trash is illegally disposed in our state, as illustrated in Figure 1.

This report was created with support from the PA Department of Environmental Protection.