

SDSU Study Says Cigarette Butts Kill Fish | [View Clip](#)

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San Diego State University researchers say filter-tipped cigarette butts are toxic to marine and fresh-water fish. KPBS Environment Reporter Ed Joyce tells us they want those butts classified as hazardous waste.

SDSU Public Health Professor Tom Novotny and other members of the Cigarette Butt Advisory Group plan to recommend that filtered cigarette butts should have new requirements for disposal.

They say the toxic waste in the butts harms wildlife and the environment.

"It is toxic at rather low concentrations," Novotny said. "Even one butt in a liter of water can kill the fish in a period of 96 hours."

The recommendation is based on new research from **SDSU** Public Health Professor Rick Gersberg.

A cigarette butt is a combination of a plastic filter and the remnants of a smoked cigarette.

The filter is non-biodegradable, and the tobacco remnant is toxic until it biodegrades into the environment.

What remains in the filter are residues, tars, and particulates.

Novotny says cigarette butts are the number one littered substance in the world, with several years as the number one single item picked up on beach cleanup days in San Diego and elsewhere.

"When they unconsciously throw their butts onto the ground, it's not just litter, it's a toxic hazardous waste product," Novotny said. "And that's what we're trying to say. So that may be regulated at the local or state level. And we hope people will be more conscious about what they do with these cigarette butts."

He says stronger enforcement of non-smoking areas and anti-litter laws could help reduce the butts.

Other policies could include fines, waste fees or taxes to pay for recycling or making manufacturers pay for cleanup costs.