



1.0 Authority

[Section 287.81 Wis. Stats.](#) prohibits the deposit of litter on or along highways of the state.

Wisconsin Administrative Code [Chapter Adm 2.06](#) includes handbills, literature, and promotional materials or devices in the definition of litter.

2.0 Background

The Wisconsin Department of Transportation initiated the Adopt-A-Highway (AAH) program in 1990 to allow groups to volunteer and directly support the state's anti-litter program. The purpose of the program is to help reduce and control litter along state trunk highways and create public awareness of the issue.

Due to safety concerns, the department does not adopt out freeway, expressway and Interstate highways and interchanges. Many volunteer groups have adopted highway segments covering a large portion of the state's roadsides.

The program serves to:

- Reduce litter along highways.
- Build broad-based, active public support and environmental stewardship of the state's roadsides.
- Educate the traveling public about litter control.
- Enhance the environment and beautify roadways.
- Build positive public/agency relationships.

Contact names and more information are found at the department's [Adopt-A-Highway program](#) website.

3.0 Adopt-A-Highway Group Responsibilities

Under the program, each qualified group of volunteers takes responsibility for litter control on a segment of state trunk highway. The group picks up litter on this segment at least three times per year between April 1 and November 1. Whenever possible, the AAH group should coordinate its litter control activities with the county mowing schedule so that litter is picked up before mowing occurs.

Litter, for this purpose, is defined as any object that should not be on the right of way. However, AAH groups should not pick up hazardous materials, large objects, or animal carcasses.

AAH groups do not work on divided highway medians, inside the middle of roundabouts or bridges, in tunnels, on overpasses, or around other structures dangerous for volunteers.

4.0 Department Responsibilities

The department issues permits to groups that have submitted applications to adopt sections of state highway right of way. Applications, clean-up reports, and segment abandonments are processed in an online form submission on the Adopt-A-Highway website.

The department maintains the website and online active segments map for the Adopt-A-Highway program. It furnishes safety guidelines, safety vests, a safety training video, trash bags, two "people working" traffic control signs and two acknowledgment signs displaying the name of the adopting group, one for each end of the AAH segment.

5.0 County Responsibilities

Upon notification of the completion of an AAH litter pickup cycle, counties are responsible for pick-up and proper disposal of trash bags left alongside the road by AAH groups.

The counties install state-furnished AAH signs, posts and hardware at the beginning and end of each adopted highway segment.

Costs for sign installation and the collection and disposal of bags of litter should be charged to the appropriate Routine Maintenance Agreements (RMA) project ID numbers and the proper activity codes as outlined below.

- Collection and disposal of bags of litter should be charged to project ID 00xx-01-33 using activity code 042, for litter pickup.
- Sign post costs and installation should be charged to project ID 00xx-01-61 with activity code 081, Permanent sign repair.

County patrol staff are responsible for picking up litter on divided highway medians, center of roundabouts or bridges, in tunnels, on overpasses, or around other structures that would be dangerous for volunteers. This time should be charged to the RMA litter pickup, activity code 042. See HMM 07-01-20, Litter Pick-up by Counties.

The AAH project ID number 0072-01-50 is for the purchase of AAH materials and supplies. Material and supplies include safety vests, trash bags, “people working” traffic control signs, brackets for “people working” signs, and the AAH acknowledgement signs. Counties must not charge their time to this project ID number.

6.0 Hazardous Materials

Hazardous materials or waste are not to be moved. AAH groups and counties are not to move or transport hazardous materials. For more information on hazardous materials see the WDNR website on [proper management of hazardous waste in Wisconsin](#) and the WisDOT Adopt-A-Highway website on [safety education](#).