



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

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Protecting Our Planet—And Our Health—By Saying Goodbye to Scrap Tires

PATTY RITCHIE September 1, 2015

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Senator Ritchie's Weekly Column

We've all seen them—piles of waste tires in yards and roadways. According to the EPA, roughly 290 million waste tires are generated annually. Not only can these waste tires be unsightly and expensive to dispose of, they present health and environmental hazards too. Here are a few of the ways that waste tires can put your health—and the health of others—at risk:

Tires can act as breeding ground for pests: It's estimated that one single waste tire can act as breeding ground for up to one million disease-carrying mosquitoes. It's these mosquitoes that are responsible for transmitting deadly diseases, like EEE and West Nile. In addition, rodents, which are also known to carry disease, can make homes in piles of waste tires.

Tires are major fire hazards: If a pile of waste tires catches fire, it can be extremely difficult for emergency crews to extinguish. When tire fires occur, they often times pose a serious threat to the communities in which they are happening. When tires burn, they break down into toxic compounds including oil and gases. In fact, according to the EPA, one single vehicle tire can produce more than two gallons of oil when burned.

Tires have the power to contaminate soil and water: When a tire burns, the residual oil can seep into the ground and cause surface water, ground water and soil to become contaminated. According to the EPA, for every million tires consumed by fire, roughly 55,000 gallons of runoff oil can pollute the environment if it's not contained and collected.

In recent years, I've been doing my part to help clean up our county and reduce the risk of hazards posed by improper disposal of waste tires. Through my free waste tire drop off events, people throughout

Jefferson, Oswego and St. Lawrence Counties have been given the opportunity to dispose of waste tires that might be littering their lawns or roadways free of charge. Over the past two years, these events have resulted in the disposal of nearly 40,000 tires, which translates to about 560 tons of tires.

These free disposal events have been made possible through special grants I've secured in the budget to help "Fight the Bite," and prevent mosquito borne diseases, as waste tires act as breeding ground for insects. In recent years, I've worked to deliver more than a half million dollars in funding to help fight EEE. In addition to free waste tire disposal events, this funding has made possible free vaccine clinics to help protect horses, which are particularly susceptible to EEE, educational outreach to schools and community organizations and more.

Making sure our communities stay safe from the health and environmental threats posed by waste tires is a team effort. For more information on upcoming free waste tire disposal events, I invite you to visit my website, www.ritchie.nysenate.gov.