

PACIFICA / City bans smoking on beaches, pier

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Hoping to see fewer cigarette butts on the beaches of Pacifica, the City Council voted unanimously Monday night to ban smoking on public beaches and the town's popular fishing pier.

When the law goes into effect at the end of October, the beaches and pier will become part of a growing list of outdoor public spaces -- including many beaches in Southern California -- where smoking is prohibited. Pacifica is believed to be the first city in the Bay Area to outlaw smoking on its waterfront.

Cigarette butts are the most common form of litter found along beaches, according to the Ocean Conservancy, which conducts annual coastline cleanups.

Pacifica's four public beaches usually rank among the highest for the amount of cigarette litter collected, according to **Susan Danielson**, who led San Mateo County's coastline cleanup for the past two years and pushed the council to adopt the smoking ban. Three cleanups yielded more than 1,200 butts on the beaches and a one-day effort to clear the pier of trash netted 920 butts.

"I'm really thrilled," Danielson said Tuesday about the new law. "I've been picking up butts for six to seven years."

Unlike many other forms of trash, cigarette butts can take years to decompose and pose a threat to wildlife on land and in the sea.

Violators of Pacifica's ban will be fined \$100 for a first offense, \$200 for a second offense and \$500 for a third or subsequent offenses. Police, however, won't be asked to patrol the beaches or pier in search of violators.

By posting signs and raising public awareness about the ban, Pacifica officials said, they will be relying mostly on self-policing and peer pressure to enforce the ban.