

DATA POINTS

Research, Data, and Analysis Focused on Central Texas

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How Close Is Your Nearest Illegal Dumping Site?

Author: Christiane Alepuz

The illegal disposal of waste along highways, at dead-end streets, in parks, and along ditches, creeks, and rivers, is a dangerous and growing problem in the Central Texas region. Illegally dumped trash often includes furniture, appliances, lead acid batteries, household garbage, building materials, used tires, and chemicals such as paint, oil, and antifreeze. These materials can be dangerous to public health and safety. Hazardous chemicals can pollute surface water and groundwater and dumped items can create a breeding ground for insects and rodents. Illegal dumping is considered a public nuisance; other public nuisances include abandoned and neglected properties, junked vehicles, and the improper disposal of waste on private property.

The Capital Area Regional Environmental Task Force (RETF) is a 10-county network of law enforcement, code enforcement, and health department officers working to prevent illegal dumping and other environmental crimes. The task force was initiated in May of 1996 through initiatives to combat environmental crimes on a regional level. CAPCOG's Solid Waste Program supports the RETF and illegal dumping efforts through funding from the TCEQ. CAPCOG provides centralized coordination for the Task Force which provides support with technical expertise, outreach and education, and training in environmental law.

The RETF provides a number of tools to peace officers and code enforcement officers to prevent illegal dumping and collect data. RETF members can check out game cameras and GPS units to monitor and track dump sites. The Task Force also provides No Dumping road signs to cities and counties that warn dumpers of the penalties of dumping and encourage citizens to report illegal dumping to the hotline. The RETF's illegal dumping hotline (1-877-NO-DUMPS) allows citizens to report illegal dumping in their area.

Map of Dump Sites and Public Nuisance Sites at the County Level

From the data collected on the GPS units and other data provided by counties, CAPCOG has mapped the locations of illegal dump sites and the No Dumping sign locations for the counties. Additionally, CAPCOG has mapped the public nuisance sites for Bastrop, Burnet, and Llano Counties as technical assistance for RETF members. In addition to the data points, CAPCOG also created a heat map of the illegal dumping sites for each county. The heat map easily displays where concentrations of illegal dump sites are located. Since most dump sites are on un-incorporated county land, the county specific heat maps easily display where there are large concentrations of dump sites within each county. This data set is not comprehensive for the whole region. Blanco, Hays, Fayette, Lee, and Williamson Counties do not collect illegal dumping spatial data, so the map is not representative of any illegal dumping occurring in those counties.

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Check out the map by [clicking here](#). Use the layer list on the left to turn the layers on/off. You can see what each layer's symbol is under the layer name or by clicking the legend icon (three horizontal lines) at the top right. Additionally, you can click any data point on the map and a pop-up box will provide details.

Map of Dump Sites from Illegal Dumping Hotline

The RETF operates an illegal dumping hotline (1-877-NO-DUMPS) which allows citizens to report illegal dumping at specific locations. CAPCOG has mapped the locations of the hotline calls from 2017-2018. There are a total of 165 Hotline calls mapped, with the majority from Travis County.

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A few of the interesting findings from the maps include:

- People are travelling out of the cities and into the country to illegally dump. This is evident in a few locations on the map:
 - In Bastrop County and Caldwell County, a large concentration of the dump sites is on the border with Travis County.
 - Caldwell County also has a hot spot of dumping right across from the county line near San Marcos.
- The majority of dump sites are near a creek, river, or lake.
 - This can cause the dumped debris to get into the waterway, which can cause increased levels of water pollution.
- In Austin and Travis County, the majority of illegal dumping happens east of I-35.
- The Kingsland area, south of Lake Buchanan in Burnet County and Llano County, is a problem area of public nuisance cases for both counties.

By mapping illegal dump site and sign location data, local jurisdictions use this data to target increased law enforcement and code enforcement patrols, inform area landowners, post illegal dumping prevention signs and cameras, and to target need for outreach and education on responsible avenues for solid waste disposal and/or illegal dumping prevention. CAPCOG also provides outreach and education materials in both English and Spanish, to help inform residents about illegal dumping regulations. Together, CAPCOG and local jurisdictions are working to combat the problem of illegal dumping and to minimize the negative impacts illegal dumping has on the regional environment and quality of life.

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