

City of East Lansing One Pager Plus

Party Litter Ordinance FAQs

Under this ordinance, what is considered “party litter”?

Party litter is defined in Section 14-31 of the City Code as “bottles, cans, cups, kegs, food wrappers or containers, and other waste material which, if thrown or deposited as herein prohibited, tends to create a public nuisance as defined in Chapter 26 of the City Code, or which is detrimental to the public health, safety and general welfare.”

Why did the City decide to change the Party Litter ordinance?

The former ordinance did not gain a desirable level of compliance. Before, it was possible to receive multiple warnings without getting a ticket. In 2010, 69 dwellings received three or more warnings; one received 21. Multiple warnings did not change behavior, so enforcement officers needed to address chronic littering more aggressively. The goal of the amended ordinance is to gain compliance from chronic offenders, not to penalize students (or non-students) for gathering responsibly.

What role did students play in formulating this ordinance?

For the most part, students view cleaning up party litter—or preventing it in the first place—as a reasonable expectation of a responsible neighbor. Feedback from the University Student Commission and Community Relations Coalition played a significant role in drafting the ordinance.

It doesn’t seem fair that there is no warning included in the ordinance.

Warnings will still be issued for minor offenses. PACE officers have the discretion to issue warnings rather than tickets. ***The no-warning ticket will be for the most severe and/or repeated offenses.***

What are the criteria for issuing a ticket without a warning?

We have all passed by houses where it is obvious that a large party was held the night before and no apparent efforts were made to clean up the mess. The presence of beer pong tables or other such items; the concentration of party litter at single house; and police awareness of the party could be circumstances that lead to ticketing without a warning.

The City Council gave the PACE department and the police department clear direction that warnings should still be given and that only repeat offenders should be ticketed. The City will have to prove in court that the litter was generated by the occupants of the house or their guests. While this may involve pictures, the Court could find the testimony of the PACE officers to be sufficient.



Party Litter Ordinance FAQs (Continued)

What are the fines and costs?

Fines for party litter are assessed by the Court accordingly:

- First offense: \$150
- Second offense: \$200
- Third offense: \$300
- Fourth offense: \$500

Additional costs may be charged if the party is declared a nuisance gathering and intervention is required. **The schedule of fines and costs is subject to change.** Call the court at (517) 351-4568 or visit www.54Bdistrictcourt.com for updated information. Conditions can be imposed on a rental license if there are five or more tickets issued within a 12 month period—no matter what the violation is.

Is community service an option instead of paying a fine?

Yes. It is possible to request to perform community service instead of paying a fine. This would be handled by the court system.

Will I be penalized for prior tenants who received party litter tickets?

All that the PACE officers will be aware of is whether someone had been found responsible for a ticket that was written for the property within the last 180 days. If the occupants show that they are an entirely new group of tenants, the fine would be adjusted accordingly. If the occupants are returning tenants, it would likely be considered a prior offense.

Most of the time, the litter in my yard blew over from someone else's property or was dropped by someone walking by. Am I still responsible for picking it up?

As unfair as it might seem, you are responsible for clearing your property of litter and debris. This cuts down on litter before it can end up somewhere else.

Can't I do what I want on my property?

In terms of allowing litter to remain on your property? No. Left untouched, litter can blow into neighboring yards. In addition to being unsightly, litter and glass can find their way into public rights-of-way, like sidewalks and streets—creating hazards for pedestrians and clogging sewer basins.



Party Litter Ordinance FAQs (Continued)

How can I avoid a ticket?

- Make recycling/trash options available at your party.
- Clean up immediately after your party.
- Pay attention to reminders from your landlord.

What is the ultimate goal with respect to this ordinance?

Party litter is a community issue. From that perspective, the hope is to change the way people think about their responsibilities as neighbors. Litter is not just a nuisance. It should be considered as pollution that can have a lasting negative impact on the environment. Students and non-student residents deserve to live in clean neighborhoods with safe pedestrian passage.

