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Discarded face masks now common sight in shores of Manila Bay

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by [Ellalyn De Vera-Ruiz](#)

Due to its improper disposal, single-use face masks are now being washed up on the shores of Manila Bay, further endangering the livelihood of people who rely on the bay's aquatic resources.

The Department of Environment and Natural Resources-National Capital Region (DENR-NCR) said discarded medical face masks are “slowly becoming a common sighting in the waters of Manila Bay” along with cigarette butts and disposable plastics.

It appealed to Metro Manila residents to properly dispose of used face masks and other medical wastes, or better yet use washable face masks.

Be responsible for your used face masks, the DENR-NCR said, and help in the cleanup, rehabilitation, and protection of Manila Bay and its tributaries.

The DENR continues to seek ways to restore the water quality of Manila Bay to a level fit for swimming, as mandated in the mandamus issued by the Supreme Court in 2008.

The DENR-Environmental Management Bureau (EMB) has been enjoining everyone to observe proper waste segregation starting in their homes.

“We specifically call on all households who have members identified as ‘persons under investigation’ or ‘persons under monitoring’ to take extra precaution in handling their special wastes by initially disinfecting it with chlorine based solution prior to collection to prevent any further spread of the COVID-19 virus in the community,” it said.

Practicing proper waste segregation is in accordance with the Republic Act (RA) 9003 or the Ecological Solid Waste Management Act of 2000.

The EMB pointed out that proper handling of household healthcare wastes, such as used face masks and gloves that are considered as special wastes will help stop the spread of coronavirus disease.

Local government units nationwide were likewise urged to ensure the compliance of their constituents with the proper segregation, handling, and disposal of wastes in accordance with the provisions of RA 9003 and RA 6969 otherwise known as Toxic Substances and Hazardous and Nuclear Wastes Control Act of 1990.

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