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EcoWaste Coalition calls on IATF to enforce proper disposal of face masks

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A waste and pollution watchdog group expressed alarm over the reckless disposal of used face masks outside the Rizal Memorial Sports Complex in Manila where thousands of locally stranded individuals (LSIs) packed over the weekend.

The EcoWaste Coalition appealed on Tuesday to the Inter-agency Task Force on Emerging Infectious Diseases (IATF) to direct all local government units (LGUs) to simultaneously enforce a ban on littering, especially of soiled disposable masks.

The group warned that improper disposal of soiled masks, which contain respiratory droplets of people who wore them, may endanger the health of the public.

It also warned that failure to halt the littering of disposable face masks and other protective gears add to plastic trash and other pollutants harming the marine ecosystems.

Photos taken by the group's Basura Patrollers showed disposable masks scattered on gutters and sidewalks not only outside the premises of the Rizal Memorial Sports Complex but also in Caloocan, Makati, Manila, Pasay and Quezon City.

Jove Benosa, Zero Waste campaigner of the EcoWaste Coalition asked the IATF and local government authorities to take immediate action on the situation.

“To draw attention to this pressing problem and the need for citizens’ cooperation, LGUs may enact new ordinances or simply enforce existing ones that prohibit and penalize littering of waste materials in line with R.A. 9003, or the Ecological Solid Waste Management Act,” Benosa said.

“LGUs should urgently act to educate and mobilize the public on proper disposal of soiled face masks, gloves, tissues, wipes and other potentially infectious wastes to protect human health, especially the health of waste workers, and to prevent the spillage of such discards into the oceans,” he added.

<https://mb.com.ph/2020/07/28/ecowaste-coalition-calls-on-iatf-to-enforce-proper-disposal-of-face-masks/>