Facts about Styrofoam® Litter (Expanded Polystyrene Foam) “Polystyrene Foam” in the Marine Environment

• Expanded polystyrene foam (EPS), (commonly known as Styrofoam®) is pervasive in the marine environment. Like most plastics, polystyrene is lightweight and floats. When littered, it is carried from streets and through storm drains out to the ocean.¹

• Plastics, including EPS, photodegrade. That is, they break down into smaller and smaller pieces and marine animals easily mistake polystyrene for food.

• The lifetime of plastics in the marine environment is unknown. Some researchers feel that the composition of conventional petroleum-based plastics as durable polymers means they will degrade to increasingly smaller sizes but never disappear.

• Roughly 80 percent of marine debris originates from land-based sources. Plastics comprise 90 percent of floating marine debris.

• A study of beach debris at 43 sites along the Orange County coast found EPS was the second most abundant form of beach debris.

From Clean Water Action, California