

SANTA MONICA SINGLE-USE CARRYOUT BAG BAN FAQs

Background

On February 8, 2011 the Santa Monica City Council unanimously voted to ban the use of single-use carryout bags within Santa Monica. [Santa Monica Ordinance](#)



When did the ordinance take effect?

- March 9, 2011 The Single-Use Carryout Bag Ordinance is adopted.
- September 1, 2011 The Single-Use Carryout Bag Ordinance will be enforced prohibiting stores from distributing single-use carryout plastic bags and regulating the use of paper bags. This six month grace period will allow city staff time to conduct workshops and other outreach activities to provide information and assistance to affected businesses and to residents.

How are single-use plastic carryout bags harmful to the environment?

- They are consumed in extremely high volumes (more than 26 million per year in Santa Monica)
- They are produced from non-renewable resources
- They are designed to be disposable (rather than reusable)
- Difficult to recycle. Less than 5% of the 19 billion (19,000,000,000) plastic bags used annually in California are actually recycled
- A significant and visible component of litter and do not biodegrade. They remain in the environment as marine, storm drain, and beach pollution for decades
- A significant hazard to marine animals and birds, which often mistake plastic bags as food

Why is there a \$0.10 fee on recycled paper carryout bags?

The fee of \$0.10 on recycled paper carryout bags encourages the use of reusable bags. This cost pass-through reimburses retailers for the costs of providing recycled paper carry out bags to their customers. All of the revenue from the cost pass-through remains with the store.

How do I avoid paying 10 cents for each recycled paper bag?

It's easy! Remember to bring your own reusable bags to the store. Some stores will even offer you a credit or gift for bringing your own bag!

Reusable Bags:

How can I remember to bring my reusable bag with me?

- Write "BRING YOUR BAG" at the top of your shopping list.
- Purchase or make bags that you really enjoy using and those that instill pride. Remember, they make great gifts.
- Have different bags, baskets and carts for different types of shopping....a knapsack by your bike or a compact pouch-type bag in your handbag or purse.
- After you unpack and wash your bags remember to place them next to your house keys.
- Bags you can see are not easily forgotten.
- Forgot your bags? Go back to the car and get them! You will remember next time.
- Remember: Share a Bag! If you see that someone has forgotten a bag offer them one of yours.

What if I can't afford to purchase a reusable bag?

Take advantage of our "Share a Bag" program. Shoppers who have an extra reusable bag can leave it at a participating secondhand store or at a farmers market. Shoppers who need a bag can pick one up at a participating secondhand store or at a farmers market.

Pick up a free bag at one of the Bag Giveaway Event held throughout the year. These free durable bags are locally made by GreenVetsLA out of scrap military material and will last for years to come.

Customers participating in the California Special Supplemental Food program for Women, Infants, and Children and a customer participating in the Supplemental Food program are eligible to receive a free reusable bag or recycled paper bag at the point of sale from a grocery stores, convenience stores, minimarts, liquor store, drug stores and pharmacies.

Can I get rewarded for bringing my reusable bag when I shop?

Many retailers in Santa Monica reward customers for bringing their own reusable bags by offering a store credit or donation to a local charity, providing a gift or an on-going drawing to win a prize or refund.

How should I care for my Reusable Bag?

The best reusable bags are the ones that can be used over and over again and are machine washable in order to be cleaned properly to prevent germs from accumulating. Wash them as often as you would wash towels or a cutting board. Many people choose to designate different styles of bags for different types of products, such as separate bags for animal products and produce vs dry goods. Some reusable bags can't be placed in the washing machine. If you choose to purchase these bags check the manufacturer's instructions for disinfecting and cleaning them.

Why are reusable bags better for the Environment?

Reusable bags do not pollute the environment and help reduce landfill waste because they are used again and again. Therefore, Santa Monica residents and taxpayers do not have to pay the clean-up costs and landfill fees related to disposable, single-use carryout bags.

Where can I get a reusable bag?

You can take part in the "Share a Bag" program by picking up a free gently used reusable bag from participating secondhand stores and from any of the four Santa Monica Farmers Markets. For new bags, prices, and where to purchase them, review the Reusable Bag Distributor's List.



What is the City of Santa Monica's definition of a reusable bag?

"Reusable bag" means a bag with handles that is specifically designed and manufactured for multiple reuse and meets all of the following requirements:

- has a minimum lifetime of 125 uses, which for purposes of this subsection, means the capability of carrying a minimum of 22 pounds 125 times over a distance of at least 175 feet;
- has a minimum volume of 15 liters; is machine washable or is made from a material that can be cleaned or disinfected; does not contain lead, cadmium, or any other heavy metal in toxic amounts, as defined by applicable state and federal standards and regulations for packaging or reusable bags;

- has printed on the bag, or on a tag that is permanently affixed to the bag, the name of the manufacturer, the location (country) where the bag was manufactured, a statement that the bag does not contain lead, cadmium, or any other heavy metal in toxic amounts, and the percentage of postconsumer recycled material used, if any; and if made of plastic, is a minimum of at least 2.25 mils thick.

Bag Recycling:

Can plastic carryout bags be recycled?

- Yes, you can place them in your recycle bin for collection within the city.
- To be best recycled you may take them to recycling bins available at all Santa Monica grocery stores. However, plastic carryout bags are extremely difficult to recycle.
- Recycling equipment shuts down about three times per eight-hour shift because bags get caught in conveyers and pulleys.
- About nineteen billion (19,000,000,000) single-use bags are used annually in California but less than 5% are recycled.

How are paper bags, recycled or not, harmful to the environment?

- In the US, about 14 million (14,000,000) trees are cut down to make paper bags annually.
- Cutting down trees releases carbon dioxide, a greenhouse gas, into the atmosphere, which contributes to global warming. Trees absorb carbon dioxide and release oxygen into the air. These natural global warming defenders are destroyed when paper products are made.
- Four times the amount of energy is used in the production of a paper bag than in the production of a plastic bag.
- Recycling paper requires ten times the amount of energy than recycling plastic does.

Can I recycle reusable bags?

Try and purchase durable reusable bags that can be machine washed and used for years. If you have extra bags remember to drop them off at one of the designated [“Share a Bag”](#) exchange locations at one of the four farmers markets or a participating secondhand store.

For information on City of Santa Monica recycling programs, visit the [Resource Recovery and Recycling website](#).

Retail Management:

What stores must comply with this ordinance?

- All retail establishments are prohibited from providing “single-use plastic carryout bags” to customers at the point of sale.
- All grocery stores, convenience stores, minimarts, liquor store, drug stores and pharmacies are prohibited from providing free distribution of single-use paper and plastic carryout bags.

Are there any exceptions to this ban?

- Yes, the Single-use Carryout Bag Ordinance does NOT prohibit the distribution of plastic “product bags” such as those distributed within a grocery store for bagging produce or meat.
- Stores are required to provide customers participating in the California Special Supplemental Food program for Women, Infants, and Children and customers participating in the Supplemental Food program with a reusable bag or recycled paper bag at no cost at the point of sale.

- There is also a public health and safety exemption for restaurants and other food providers allowing them to provide single-use plastic bags for the transportation of prepared take-out foods and liquids.
- Farmers Market: Distribution of all single-use carryout bags (plastic, bioplastic or paper) is prohibited. The farmers markets are allowed the use of plastic product bags and small paper bags for mushrooms, free of charge.)

What stores are required to charge 10 cents for each recycled paper bag?

All grocery stores, convenience stores, minimarts, liquor stores, drug stores and pharmacies are prohibited from providing free distribution of single-use paper and plastic carryout bags. If these stores decide to make paper carryout bags available for their customers, they are required to sell recycled paper carryout bags made from 100% total recycled content with 40% post-consumer recycled content for not less than 10 cents per bag.

Grocery stores, convenience stores, minimarts, liquor stores, drug stores and pharmacies are the largest distributors of single-use carryout bags. About 75% of single-use bag waste comes from these stores.



Which retailers do NOT have to charge for single-use paper bags?

Other types of retail stores such as department stores, clothing stores, and stores that sell durable goods are allowed to distribute paper bags to customers for free. These types of stores do not typically distribute single-use plastic carryout bags to customers in large volumes, as compared to grocery stores, convenience stores, mini-marts, liquor stores and pharmacies. Vendors at the City’s Santa Monica Farmers Markets are not required to charge customers for paper bags.

What is the City of Santa Monica’s definition of a single-use plastic carryout bag?

“Single Use Plastic Carryout Bag” means any bag that is less than 2.25 mils thick and is made predominately of plastic derived from petroleum or from bio-based sources, such as corn or other plant sources.

What is the City of Santa Monica’s definition of a recycled paper carryout bag?

"Recycled Paper Bag" means a paper carryout bag provided by a store to a customer at the point of sale that meets all of the following requirements:

- Except as provided in subsection (2), the paper carryout bag contains a minimum of 40 percent postconsumer recycled materials.
- An eight pound or smaller recycled paper bag shall contain a minimum of 20 percent postconsumer recycled material.
- The paper carryout bag is accepted for recycling in curbside programs in a majority of households that have access to curbside recycling programs in the City.
- The paper carryout bag is capable of composting, consistent with the timeline and specifications of the American Society of Testing and Material (ASTM) Standard Specification for Compostable Plastics D6400, as published in September 2004.
- Printed on the paper carryout bag is the minimum percentage of postconsumer content.

What are the penalties for non-compliance with the Single-Use Carryout Bag Ordinance?

- [\(S.M.M.C. 1.09\)](#)
- A verbal or written warning may be provided.
- The 1st violation results in a fine of \$75.00.
- The 2nd violation results in a fine of \$93.75.

- The 3rd violation results in a fine of \$112.50.
- Repeat Violators could be forwarded to the City Attorney's Office for criminal prosecution.
- Why has the City of Santa Monica banned single-use plastic carryout bags?
- The intent of the Single-use Carryout Bag Ordinance is to significantly reduce the environmental impacts related to single-use plastic and paper carry out bags and promote a major shift towards the use of reusable bags.

Other Bag Bans:

Have any other cities done this?

Yes. Many other cities and countries have passed similar ordinances.

Bag bans in California:

Marin County (2011), Los Angeles County (2010), San Jose (2011), San Francisco (2007), Palo Alto (2009), Fairfax (2008), Malibu (2008), Oakland (2007), Long Beach (2011) and Callabastas (2011).

Bag bans in the U.S.:

30 villages in Alaska (1998); Brownsville, Texas (2011); Edmonds, Washington (2009); Marshall County, Iowa (2009); Maui County and Kauai County, Hawaii (2011); Paia, Maui, Hawaii (2008); North Carolina (Outer Banks) (2009); Suffolk County, New York (1988); and Westport, Connecticut (2008).

Bag bans in other countries:

Bangladesh (2002); Bhutan (2007); Botswana (2007); Brazil (2007); Buenos Aires, Argentina (2008); China (2008); Coles Bay, Tasmania (2003); Egypt (Red Sea Province) (2009); Eritrea (2005); France (2010); Corsica (1999); Paris, France (2007); India (2002: All bags incl. plastic must be greater than 20 microns in thickness); Delhi, India (2009); Chandigarh, India (2008); Himachal Pradesh, India (2003); Maharashtra, India (2005); Italy (2010); Karachi, Pakistan (2008); Kenya (2007); Loddon Shire, Victoria (Australia) (2005); Macedonia (2009); Coldwell (2008), Eriksdale (2008), and Leaf Rapids (2007), Manitoba, Canada; Mexico City, Mexico (2009); Huskisson (2003), Kangaroo Valley (2003), and Mogo (2003), New South Wales (Australia); Nova Scotia, Canada (2008: applies to liquor stores only); Papua New Guinea (2004); Quebec, Canada (2009: provincial ban applies to liquor stores only); Rwanda (2005); Somalia (2005); Somaliland (2005); South Africa (2003); South Australia (2008); Spain (2009: mandatory phase-out by 50%); Taiwan (2007); Tanzania (2006); Uganda (2007); Ulanbaatar, Mongolia (2008); United Arab Emirates (2013); United Kingdom: Aylsham, England (2008); Banchory, Scotland (2008); Girton, England (2008); Hay-On-Wye, Wales (2007); Hebden Bridge, England (2007); Henfield, England (2008); Kew, England (2008); Llandysilio, Wales (2007); Modbury, England (2007); Overton, England (2007); Selkirk, Scotland (2008); and Tisbury, England (2008).

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