

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS ABOUT THE SINGLE-USE PLASTICS ORDINANCE

1. What are single use plastics?

- Single-use items or disposable items are products and packaging that we throw out after only one use. These items are used for only minutes but their impact on our environment can last thousands of years.

2. Why a ban on certain single-use plastic in Newtown Borough?

- To reduce plastic pollution and waste.
- To reduce toxic petrochemicals in our food and environment.
- To reduce the expenses of waste collection and litter clean-up.
- Thin plastic bags cannot be recycled as they contaminate and clog recycling machines.

3. Which businesses would this ordinance affect?

- All Retail Establishments in Newtown Borough would need to comply with the new law.
- A Retail Establishment includes any location where food or other products are offered to the public by direct sale or delivery.
- These businesses would include: grocery stores and supermarkets, convenience stores, food marts, restaurants, take-out establishments, delivery services, clothing stores, drug stores, and stores selling non- perishable items.

4. What are the key dates to I need to know?

- The timeline when enacted would be 180 days after the effective date of approval by Council (March 17, 2024).
- Beginning on September 17, 2024, 180 days from the Effective Date of March 17, 2024, Retail Establishments can no longer provide single-use carry out plastic bags and polystyrene cups and containers to customers. Paper bags and reusable bags may be provided, subject to certain requirements as explained below. Plastic straws and utensils can only be provided upon request.
- Retail Establishments who need more time to use up their plastic inventory or who cannot find alternative packaging, may apply for a transition period of up to one year from the Effective Date of March 17, 2024, instead of 180 days from the Effective Date.

5. When do businesses have to start posting signs?

- Signage begins 90 days (June 17, 2024) after adoption and continuing for 6 months thereafter.
- The Newtown Borough Environmental Advisory Council has developed suggested signage for businesses to use.

6. What types of bags are banned under the Ordinance?

- Any single-use plastic bag created through a "blown film extrusion" process, which is basically any grocery store or other plastic bags without stitched handles.

7. What bags are exempted under the Ordinance?

- Plastic bags used within the store to pack or wrap perishable items, such as fruits and vegetables, nuts and grains, candy (including chocolates), or meats and fish.
- Bags used in a pet store to hold live animals such as fish or insects.
- Bags used to transport produce, laundry bags, dry-cleaning bags, newspaper delivery bags and bags used to contain or wrap frozen foods, meat or fish are exempt.

8. What type of bags will the business be able to provide to shoppers?

- Paper bags that are labeled 100% recyclable, contain no old growth fiber, contain a minimum of 40% post-consumer recycled content and have visible labeling according to the Ordinance.
- A reusable bag that has stitched handles, made of cloth or other machine washable fabric, or made of polypropylene that can be hand washed and disinfected.

9. Will Retail Establishments be able to charge a fee for their bags?

- Retail Establishments may provide recyclable paper bags at the point of sale for a fee of not less than \$0.15 per bag.
- All monies collected for the paper bag shall be retained by the Retail Establishment and the charge shall be identified on the receipt.
- The Retail Establishment may set their own charge for their reusable bags.

10. Who collects the 15-cent fee per paper bag?

- Businesses will collect and keep bag fees to cover the cost of providing the bags. The charge is taxable and businesses are not allowed to cover the cost of the bags for the customer
- The intent of the ordinance is not to transition to paper bags, but to eliminate wasteful distribution of unnecessary bags of all materials.

11. What are the rules for plastic straws and plastic utensils under the Ordinance?

- All Retail Establishments are prohibited from providing single-use plastic straws, stirrers and utensils, except upon request by the customer.
- Retail Establishments are encouraged to switch to drinkable lids or paper straws, as well as to find alternative, eco-friendly products.
- The EAC will help provide a list of suppliers that meet the necessary criteria.

12. What polystyrene (aka Styrofoam) food service products are banned?

- Food containers, plates, hot and cold beverage cups, trays and clamshells.
- Exempted items include products to package raw, uncooked or butchered meat, fish, poultry or seafood.

13. What if a business has a reason they can't comply within 180 days?

- The business can apply for a waiver to extend the transition to up to one year.
- Retail Establishments are encouraged to find alternative, eco-friendly or recyclable products that are readily available.

14. Will there be fines for non-compliance of the Ordinance?

- Education and understanding are most important and our first priority. Therefore, there will be a written warning for first offenses by Retail Establishments, before any monetary fines are imposed.
- No fines are ever imposed on customers.
- Violations/fines are clearly stated in the ordinance

15. Which Pennsylvania municipalities have passed single-use plastic ordinances?

- 25 municipalities in Pennsylvania have now passed ordinances, of which 10 were enacted in 2023.
- The municipalities that have passed an ordinance include boroughs, townships and cities,

ranging from small municipalities such as Doylestown Borough to Philadelphia and Pittsburgh. Newtown Township adopted their Ordinance this year.

- Surrounding states: New Jersey, New York, Delaware.

