



CITY OF CHARLESTON

Plan Ahead for New Single-Use Plastics Guidelines

REVISED EFFECTIVE JULY 1, 2024

Since January 1, 2020, operations throughout Charleston have been required to eliminate single-use plastic carryout bags and certain plastic food packaging.



Beginning July 1, 2024, extra thick plastic carryout bags are not allowed, and cutlery is only allowed by customer request or at self-service stations.

These measures will mean cleaner city streets and ocean waters, but we know they also mean changes for you and your customers. Use this guide to learn more about alternatives that will work for your organization.

WHO NEEDS TO GET READY?

The guidelines apply to all commercial and nonprofit operations including:

- Concession/event vendors and food trucks
- Farmers markets/stands and takeout stands
- Schools and government
- Grocery and liquor stores
- Restaurants (including drive thrus) and bars
- Retail stores

Continued on back

What's IN?

Establishments are able to choose from numerous affordable alternatives and certain specialty items will still be allowed.

✓ Reusable Bags and Recyclable Paper Bags



✓ REUSABLE BAGS

- Cloth or other machine washable fabric
- With stitched handles
- A minimum lifetime of 125 uses and clear display of information on reuse/recycling



✓ RECYCLABLE PAPER BAGS

- Paper bags of all sizes
- With and without handles
- Including glossy gift bags with handles



✓ Recyclable or Compostable Disposable Food Containers and Service Ware

Food service ware, containers and packaging made out of materials that are compostable¹ or are accepted by the Charleston County recycling program² including:

- ✓ Aluminum
- ✓ Cardboard
- ✓ Glass
- ✓ Paper
- ✓ Recyclable plastics



What's OUT?

Operations are required to stop using:

✗ Plastic Single-Use Carryout Bags

- ✗ Intended for one-time use to transport purchases
- ✗ With heat-fused handles
- ✗ Not included in the "Exceptions: Specialty Items" section (back page)



✗ Non-Recyclable and Non-Compostable Disposable Food Containers and Service Ware

Polystyrene (also known as plastic foam or Styrofoam™) and other non-recyclable and non-compostable food service ware, carryout containers and food packaging including:

- ✗ Bowls
- ✗ Clamshells
- ✗ Cups
- ✗ Plates
- ✗ Stirrers
- ✗ Straws



(See "Exceptions: Specialty Items" section on back)

✗ Operations also will be required to stop selling or renting polystyrene:

- ✗ Bowls, cups and plates
- ✗ Coolers, containers and ice chests
- ✗ Shipping boxes and packing material

✗ Unnecessary Cutlery

- ✗ Disposable cutlery is only allowed by customer request or at self service stations.



EXCEPTIONS: Specialty Items

The following specialty items are not restricted or are exempt from restrictions:

- Bags for bulk grocery items
- Bags for raw, frozen or prepared foods
- Bread bags
- Cutlery (by customer request only)
- Condiment packages
- Deli bags
- Dry cleaning/garment bags
- Egg cartons
- Floral/plant wrapping
- Garbage bags
- Meat trays
- Newspaper bags
- Pet waste bags
- Plastic drink or soup container lids
- Produce bags
- Straws for use by customers with disabilities



WHY are we doing this?

These new measures are about cleaner streets and waterways, preserving the beauty and livability of Charleston for generations to come.

Plastic bags and containers are convenient, but they also-

- **Trash our neighborhoods and waterways.** More than 302 million tons of plastics are discarded worldwide each year.³ Plastic waste ends up on Charleston's streets and 7.6 tons are in Charleston Harbor alone.⁴
- **Threaten wildlife health.** As many as 100,000 marine animals have been injured or killed by entanglement with or ingestion of plastic waste.⁵
- **Pose risks to human health.** Plastics never fully biodegrade, but when pieces of these bags and containers are eaten by animals, the plastic enters our food chain.

WHERE can I learn more?

For detailed information, visit:

CHARLESTON-SC.GOV/PLASTIC

For specific questions:

Call (843) 724-7311 or email

citizenservices@charleston-sc.gov



NOTES & REFERENCES:

¹Use of compostable products must be combined with an active composting program to be considered acceptable. Visit the Charleston County website – www.charlestoncounty.org/departments/environmental-management/compost-program.php – for more information on materials accepted for composting and compost haulers.

²For more information about materials accepted for recycling in Charleston County, please visit www.charlestoncounty.org/departments/environmental-management/recycle-what.php

If you have specific questions about a product not listed on their website please contact the Charleston County Recycling Center at (843) 720-7111 or recycle@charlestoncounty.org.

³<https://ourworldindata.org/plastic-pollution#empirical-view>

⁴www.citadel.edu/root/change-leading-research-directed-by-dr-john-weinstein

⁵www.iflscience.com/environment/ocean-animals-%E2%80%99death-plastic%E2%80%99-could-be-occurring-more-frequently/

This guide is for explanation purposes only and is by no means meant to be a substitution for the official City of Charleston Code of Ordinances.



City of Charleston

Resilience and Sustainability

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