

Borough Of Ambler

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On August 16, 2022, Ambler Borough Council approved a law regulating single use plastics bags and single-use plastic devices such as plastic straws as well as styrofoam. This collection of questions and issues is designed to help explain the details of the new law.

What's covered under Ambler's new ordinance?

Single use plastic bags and items such as: straws, drink stirrers, beverage spill plugs, toothpicks, novelty cocktail accessories, and other drink or food accoutrements along with polystyrene food service products aka Styrofoam



When does it go into effect?

March 1, 2023, regulations for plastic bags and single use plastic devices

March 1, 2024, regulations for polystyrene food service products aka Styrofoam

What kinds of single use plastics does the ordinance cover?

Single use plastic bags and items such as: straws, drink stirrers, beverage spill plugs, toothpicks, novelty cocktail accessories, and other drink or food accoutrements along with polystyrene food service products aka: Styrofoam

What's not considered a single use plastic carry out Bag according to this ordinance?

Produce bags at a grocery store to package bulk items such as fruit vegetables, nuts, grains, or candy.

Laundry or dry-cleaner bags or Newspaper bags.

Bags used to contain or wrap frozen foods, meat or fish or bakery goods.

Bags used to contain live animals, such as fish or insects sold in a pet store.

A bag sold in packaging containing multiple bags and packaged at the time of manufacture of the bag.

A paper bag offered to the customer at the point of sale.

A reusable carryout bag offered to the customer at the point of sale. A reusable carryout bag is a durable bag with handles made and intended for repeated use.

A non-handled bag used to protect a purchased item from damaging or contaminating other purchased items when placed in a Reusable Bag, Recyclable Paper Bag or Compostable Plastic Bag;

What will happen when I get to the checkout register?

Customers may use their own bags, use a paper bag provided by the merchant, or purchase a reusable bag.

Where can I get reusable bags?

Reusable bags are widely available for purchase.

I forgot to bring my own bags. What do I do?

Some business will offer paper bags at no cost. Some businesses will sell you a reusable bag.

What kinds of single use plastics devices does the ordinance cover?

“Single-use Plastic Device” shall mean any item provided by a retail establishment to serve, consume, garnish or manipulate food or beverages that is primarily made from plastic including: straws, drink stirrers, beverage spill plugs, toothpicks, novelty cocktail accessories, and other drink or food accoutrements.

What is not considered a single use plastic device under this ordinance?

Forks, spoons, sporks, knives, and chopsticks, recyclable cups, and recyclable lids along with any item packaged with beverages prepared and packaged outside of the Borough, provided such beverages are not altered packaged or repackaged within the Borough.

I like to use a straw with my drink. What do I do?

One is permitted to be provided upon request of a customer.

Where can I get reusable straws?

There are many places to purchase reusable straws, however we hope that you shop locally.

I use a straw because of a disability, but I don't want to make a big deal out of it. What do I do?

Businesses are not legally permitted to ask you details about your accommodation and will provide a single-use straw if they have one in stock without fear of fine. You may ask for a single use plastic straw to reasonably accommodate a disability. The business may give you a straw without question if they have one in stock.

Questions for businesses...

What is considered a retail establishment?

A temporary or permanent location in the Borough where food or other products are offered to the public for direct sale or delivery to a customer, including but not limited to the following: supermarket, convenience store, service station, delicatessen, department store, dollar store, clothing store, restaurant, pharmacy, food truck, farmers' market, festival, or delivery service, but not including drycleaners.

What bags can I offer to my customers for free?

You may offer any paper bag or a reusable bag that is durable with handles made and intended for repeated use.

What if I just purchased a larger order of single-use plastics bags?

Borough Council may upon written request of a retail establishment, temporarily exempt it from the requirements of this ordinance if Borough Council finds that enforcement would cause undue hardship to the retail establishment. In granting any such temporary exemption, Council shall also state the duration of such exemption from the law if it creates a hardship such as:

The Commercial establishment has a unique circumstance or situation such that there are no reasonable alternatives to single-use plastic carry-out bags or single-use plastic straws.

Compliance with the requirements of this Chapter would deprive the business of a legally protected right.

Or.... Additional time is necessary to use existing inventory of Single-Use Plastic Carry-Out Bags or Single-Use Plastic Straws.

What straws can I offer to my customers?

You may offer your customers a reusable straw made of either: glass, stainless steel, silicone, durable and reusable plastic, or other similar material. There are also recyclable paper straws or compostable straws.

What happens if I fail to comply?

The Borough Code Enforcement Officer will initially contact the business the in violation with a warning notice if a violation has occurred.

If an additional violation of this Chapter occurs after a warning notice has been issued for the first violation, the Code Enforcement Officer shall issue a notice of violation to the business and file it with the local court where upon conviction, the business could be ordered to pay fine, court costs, and attorneys' fees.

The penalty for each violation that occurs after the issuance of the warning notice shall be a fine of no more than:

- i. \$50.00 for the first violation.
- ii. \$100.00 for the second violation.
- iii. An amount not to exceed \$600.00, as determined by the court for all separate violations.

Who can I talk to if I have questions or concerns?

Feel free to contact Glenn Kucher at code@borough.ambler.pa.us or 215-646-1000 x112 with any questions.