



City of Ashland Bring Your Bag FAQ's

In an effort to promote reusable shopping bags and reduce litter, the City of Ashland joins other Oregon cities — including Eugene, Corvallis, and Portland, and others throughout the country— in encouraging the use of reusable bags by banning single-use plastic carryout bags within Ashland beginning November 6, 2014.

Single-use plastic carryout bags offer some level of short-term convenience, but they have long-term community costs in terms of litter, recycling challenges and impact on wildlife and the environment. Eliminating much of this particular waste stream as well as promoting reusable bags instead of single use products will decrease waste and litter and benefit the community.

When are retailers required to stop providing single-use plastic carryout bags?

Ashland retailers will be required to stop providing single-use plastic carryout bags to customers on November 6, 2014 when the new ordinance goes into effect.

What types of businesses does this apply to?

All retail businesses, including grocery stores, department and clothing stores, convenience stores and local markets located within the City of Ashland will be required to provide only recycled paper bags or reusable bags as carryout bags for customers.

What about farmers' markets, street fairs, festivals, and events?

Yes. The ordinance requires compliance from any store, shop, sales outlet, or vendor located within the City of Ashland that sells goods at retail. These types of establishments fall under that definition and are required to comply.

Where can I get more information on the ordinance?

The City will be working with businesses as they transition away from using single-use plastic carryout bags. Information is available on the City's website, www.ashland.or.us/bagban , or by calling 541-552-2046.

What plastic bags are prohibited?

All single-use plastic carryout bags provided at the point of sale (checkout) that are less than 4 mils thick are prohibited. Bags constructed of durable plastic (4 mils or thicker) are considered reusable and are allowed.

What is a 'mil'?

A 'mil' is a plastics industry term for a thousandth of an inch. It does not stand for 'millimeter.'

What about compostable plastic bags? Are they allowed?

No, single use plastic bags made of compostable materials are not allowed, unless they are thicker than 4 mils

Are there any plastic bags that are still ok to offer to customers?

Yes, there are several exemptions to the ban, such as:

- Bags used inside the store to package bulk items, fruits, veggies, nuts, small hardware items, candy, etc
- Bags used to contain and protect frozen foods, meat, fish, etc
- Bags used to contain and protect flowers, potted plants or other similar products containing moisture or potential for liquid spillage
- Bags to contain unwrapped prepared foods like bakery goods
- Pharmacy prescription bags
- Bags used to protect fragile items, such as glassware and other breakables that are then placed in a paper or reusable bag at checkout.

What are the new rules on paper bags?

The goal of the ordinance is to encourage the use of reusable bags, but if the customer needs bags, paper bags made of a minimum of 40% post consumer recycled content are the new standard.

Additionally, businesses must charge the customer a ten cent (\$0.10) fee for each paper bag used at the checkout station. (fee not required for small paper bags used within the business for individual product protection)

Are there any exceptions to the required \$0.10 paper bag fee?

Yes, the fee for paper bags is waived for customers who meet the eligibility requirements for the Women, Infants and Children (WIC) program. Additionally, the City will be working with its Ashland Low Income Energy Assistance Program to provide reusable bags to those qualifying residents.

What do the businesses do with the paper bag fees they collect?

The fee is kept by the business to offset any costs associated with the transition, including any additional costs from the recycled content bags. The primary goal of the paper bag fee is to provide a small incentive/reminder for customers to bring and use reusable bags instead of paper bags.

Are there any reports to submit to the City?

No, but the paper bag fee is required to be shown on the customer receipt as a separate charge and the City has the ability to conduct an audit to determine if the fee is being collected properly. While not required, the City is interested in checking back in with businesses six months to a year after the new rules have been in effect to see how paper bag usage was affected.

What if a business refuses to comply with the ordinance?

As with any local ordinance, citations can be issued and fines imposed. The goal is not to issue citations but to ensure compliance so City staff will try to work with businesses to comply with the new regulations. If that fails, citations could be issued.

How can businesses communicate the new rules to customers?

There are several different small posters available to download from the City's website that can be placed in windows or at checkout stations to help your staff communicate the new rules to customers. These can be found at www.ashland.or.us/bagban. Promoting reusable bags is also another way to help your customers and the community in the transition. Special bring your bag day sales events, reduced or free reusable bag giveaway days or contests and other similar events can help.