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Single Use Plastic Bag Reduction By-Law FAQ

Coming soon, there will be a change to how customers will be able to take away their products from grocery and retail stores. Starting **June 1, 2021**, grocery and retail stores will no longer be able to use single use plastic bags.



Why Prohibit Single Use Plastic Bags

- Fewer Than 1 in 7 plastic bags are recycled
- Plastic particles contaminate soil and waterways and enter the food chain when wildlife ingest them.
- Single use plastic bags contribute to the death of animals through ingestion and entanglement, causing over 100,000 wildlife deaths every year
- Single use plastic bags clog storm drain systems and create a burden to the solid waste collection and recycling facilities
- A single use plastic bag can take between 400-1000 years to breakdown.
- To rid our streets and parklands of litter
- Nearly 90% of the debris in the ocean are plastic
- To help save the environment!

Single Use Plastic Bag Reduction By-Law FAQ's:

What establishments are covered by this by-law?

- **Grocery Stores:** A retail establishment where more than 50% of the gross area is devoted to the sale of food products for home preparation and consumption, which typically offers home care and personal care products.
- **Retail Store:** An establishment that offers the sale and display of merchandise within a building.

What is a single use plastic bag?

- A thin film plastic bag with handles and a thickness of 2.9 mils or less, that is intended for single use transport of purchased products.
- **Does not include:** Bags, plastic or not in which produce or products are placed by a consumer to deliver such items to the point of sale or check out area of a retail establishment. Laundry or Dry cleaning bags. Newspaper bags. Bags used to contain or wrap up frozen foods, meats, and fish to prevent or contain moisture.

What bags are permitted?

- Retail and grocery stores may provide or sell to customers' reusable bags: a bag with handles, that is designed for multiple uses and is made of thick plastic (3.0 mils or thicker), cotton, fabric, or other durable nontoxic materials.
- Customers are encouraged to bring their own reusable or biodegradable shopping bags to stores.
- Retail and grocery stores are strongly encouraged to make reusable checkout bags available for sale to customers at a reasonable price.

What education do retail and grocery stores need to provide to their customers?

- Retail and grocery stores must provide education to consumers on maintaining reusable bags in a clean and sanitary manner.

For more information, contact the Billerica Board of Health office at 978-671-0931.