



Haverhill

Office of the Mayor, Room 100
Phone: 978-374-2300 Fax: 978-373-7544
Mayor@cityofhaverhill.com

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Haverhill's Plastic Bag Ban Start Feb. 7

With the city's new plastic shopping bag ordinance about to go into effect, officials are preparing to send letters to large retail stores alerting them of the new rules.

On Feb. 7, the city will begin enforcing the plastic bag ban for retail stores with 8,000 square feet or more of business space. For "medium-sized" businesses, with between 3,000 and 8,000 square feet of retail space, the ban will go into effect May. 7.

City Council passed the ban in August, joining more than 80 Massachusetts cities and towns in prohibiting businesses from providing non-biodegradable, single-use plastic bags to customers.

Advocates say banning plastic checkout bag is critical to the health of the natural environment. The bags are blamed for killing ocean animals and birds, and they also have a considerable impact on littering as they are commonly found scattered across properties and clinging to trees. Municipalities across the country spend millions annually to collect and dispose of plastic checkout bags.

Once Haverhill's ban is in effect, retail stores may only provide recyclable or reusable bags to customers, and if they charge customers for these bags, they must sell them for at least 5 cents and the charge must be marked separately on the customer's receipt as "checkout bag charge."

The plastic bag ban does not apply to plastic laundry or dry-cleaner bags, newspaper bags or bags used to contain or wrap frozen foods, meat or fish. Outdoors farmer's markets as well as bazaars and festivals operated by nonprofits or religious institutions and retail businesses less than 3,000 square feet are not affected by the ban.

In preparing for the ban's implementation, the city has purchased thousands of reusable cloth shopping bags to distribute at no cost to residents age 65 and older. The bags are available at the Citizen's Center on Welcome Street, the Public Works facility on Primrose Street or the Mayor's Office at City Hall.

Retail stores may continue providing checkout bags to customers provided they charge at least 5 cents per bag and that the bags are made from either recycled paper, biodegradable material, polyester, polypropylene, cotton or reusable plastic that is at least 3 millimeters thick.

According to the new rules, acceptable "recyclable" or "reusable" bags must be made from either recycled paper, biodegradable material, polyester, polypropylene, cotton or reusable plastic that is at least 3 millimeters thick.

There is also a process in the regulation that allows businesses to request a 6-month "undue hardship" delay in complying with the new rules, subject to review and determination by the Inspectional Services director.

For more information or to apply for an extension, contact the Haverhill Health Department at 978-374-2338 or go to www.haverhillma.gov.



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Retailer Benefits of new plastic bag rules:

- When shoppers bring their own bags, it can lead to a cost savings because businesses will not have to purchase, store and distribute as many carryout bags to customers.
- Retail businesses, just like customers, will be helping the community reduce the environmental and resource impacts of paper and plastic carryout bag production.
- Encouraging customers to bring their own checkout bags can offer an inexpensive way to create brand awareness and do some local advertising.
- Here are some tips from retailers in other communities that have also implemented plastic bag bans:

Leading up to the ordinance effective date:

- Begin to display signs in visible locations such as cashier stations and entry doors to let customers know that single use plastic bags will no longer be available as of Feb. 7, 2019 or May 7, 2019.
- Preparing your front-line employees to help customers make the shift to reusable bags is key, both so they understand why the community supported the ban and how they can play an important role in implementation, to benefit both your company and the community.
 - They can immediately begin to ask customers, "Did you bring a bag you would like me to use?" "Would you like to purchase a reusable bag?" "Do you need a bag?" instead of automatically giving them out.

Changing customer behavior:

- Here are some additional strategies others have used to encourage their customers to use reusable bags...
- Display reminders in store parking lot/windows: "Don't forget to grab your reusable bags?"
 - Give a reusable bag away for free if the customer makes a purchase over a set amount.
 - Have store-brand bags act as permanent coupons for 5% off all purchases.
 - Donate 5 cents to a local non-profit organization for each reusable bag used to pack customer purchases.
 - Give a discount of 5-15 cents for each reusable bag used to pack customer purchase.
 - Charge 5-15 cents each for paper bags.