

Frequently Asked Questions

Prohibition of Single-Use Plastic Bags with Handles

Why can't plastic bags go in my brown recycling cart or my green trash cart?

Plastic bags have to be clean and dry to be recycled, and collecting them in single-sort curbside recycling bins with bottles and containers generally leaves them too dirty and wet to be recycled. Additionally, plastic bags can jam sorting machinery, creating problems for the businesses that sort recyclables. Since plastic bags require a different collection system and processing equipment than our curbside recycling program supports, the proper disposal for plastic bags has been at supermarkets or other facilities with specific plastic bag recycling containers; however, the majority of plastic bags are improperly disposed of.

Many people are not aware that plastic bags cannot be disposed of in either the green or brown carts. Because of this, the majority of plastic bags end up in landfills, or processing equipment is damaged when a plastic bag is disposed of improperly. For those bags that end up as litter, many studies show the harmful effects of petroleum based products on the environment, animals, and groundwater. Additionally, chemical by-products from the production and disposal of plastic bags can cause harm to humans, pets, and livestock.

Why is the City of Saco banning the use of single-use plastic bags with handles?

By banning the use of single-use plastic bags with handles, the City of Saco will be able to mitigate the improper disposal of plastic bags in landfills and the adverse effects that accompany them.

What is a single-use plastic bag?

Single-use plastic bag means a bag with consumer carrying handles made from plastic, which also may or may not be intended for a one-time use.

Who is affected?

All licensed businesses within the City of Saco.

What alternative types of bags are acceptable?

Paper bags with or without handles are acceptable. Cloth or other fabric bags and degradable resin compound bags are also acceptable. *Please check with your bag supplier as there are degradable resin compound products available that are (relatively) the same cost as a plastic bag.* Additionally, you can encourage your customers to bring their own bags.

What about my single-use bags without handles?

Businesses can still offer single-use plastic bags without handles to their customers. Examples are, but not limited to: produce bags used for vegetables, fruits, nuts, dried fruits, and meat, floral wrap, newspaper bags, dry cleaning bags, etc.

What if I don't want to offer any handled bags to my customers?

If you are a retail business, you must post a sign that is 3" x 5" at the point of sale. There must be a sign that is 10" x 14" or larger at the entrance of your establishment that states you are not offering any bags.

When does this go into effect?

The ordinance goes into effect on May 2nd, 2017. Enforcement will be delayed so that existing single-use bag inventories can be used up. Enforcement will not begin till October 1st, 2017.