



Single-Use Plastic Bag Ban Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

The Town of Bluffton has adopted an ordinance prohibiting the distribution of single-use plastic bags, which is substantially similar to ordinances adopted by Beaufort County and each municipality within Beaufort County. Below is a Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) guide for your business.

When does the Ordinance go into effect?

November 1, 2018.

What businesses are affected by the Ordinance?

Most retail establishments are subject to the new Ordinance, including grocery stores, department stores, hardware stores, liquor stores, convenience stores, farmers markets, restaurants, gift shops, and other retail stores or vendors. There is no exemption for small retailers.

What are the differences between the County and municipal Ordinances?

The County Ordinance and the Municipal Ordinances are uniform in their restrictions and exemptions regarding single-use plastic bags.

What bags are restricted by the Ordinance?

Plastic bags considered disposable and not reusable are prohibited. This includes all disposable plastic bags provided at checkout or point-of-sale.

What exemptions are allowed?

The following types of plastic bags are allowed for the following uses:

- Laundry or dry cleaning bags.
- Meat, produce and bakery bags.
- Newspaper and door-hanger bags.
- Pet waste, yard waste and garbage bags.
- Bags provided by pharmacists or veterinarians to contain prescription drugs or other medical necessities, as required by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA).
- Bags for items sold in bulk such as bulk food and bulk hardware items.
- Bags or plastic wraps for flowers, potted plants or items where dampness may be an issue.
- Bags of any type that a customer brings to the store for his or her own use to carry away goods that are not placed in a bag provided by the store.
- Bags comprised of recyclable plastic, with a minimum thickness of 2.25 mils.

Can retailers provide plastic bags for meat, produce, bulk foods and other items?

Yes. Plastic bags that are used inside stores for bulk foods and other items, for meats and produce, unwrapped bakery goods, flowers and other similar items are allowed. Only disposable plastic bags used at retail checkout are prohibited.

Is there an exemption for clothing stores?

Clothing stores must follow the same requirements as other retailers.

By what standards must I abide?

Business establishments are encouraged to provide customers with reusable carryout bags or recyclable paper bags.

What type of bag is considered reusable?

A reusable carryout bag is a carryout bag that is specifically designed and manufactured for multiple use and meets the following criteria:

- Language describing the bag's ability to be reused and recycled should be highly visible on the exterior of the bag.
- The bag has a handle, except that handles are not required for bags constructed out of recyclable paper with a height of less than 14 inches and width of less than eight inches.
- The bag is constructed of cloth, other washable fabric, or other durable materials, whether woven or non-woven; or recyclable plastic, with a minimum thickness of 2.25 mils.

What is the Town's plan for informing customers of the Ordinance?

Information is posted on the Town's website. The Town of Bluffton will continue to inform through social media, news media and other means to reach retailers and customers.

How should I get ready for the Ordinance going into effect on November 1, 2018?

Business processes should be adjusted accordingly to accommodate prohibitions and exemptions for the distribution of single-use plastic bags, as specified in the Ordinance and summarized in this FAQ.

Are retailers allowed to use up existing stocks of plastic bags after November 1, 2018?

The Ordinance is enforceable as of November 1, 2018. Business establishments are encouraged to allow current stock of single-use plastic bags to diminish prior to November 1, 2018. Retailers who are part of a national or regional retail company are encouraged to begin modifying their logistics processes as soon as possible in order to be compliant by November 1, 2018.

What is the purpose of this Ordinance?

This new law is the result of eco-friendly legislation aimed at improving our environment by curbing the distribution of single-use plastic bags and making a shift to reusable bags. Plastic bags can escape into our waterways and the ocean, where they are harmful to animals. They break down into smaller pieces of plastic that enter the food chain of animals and eventually that of humans.

Who may I call for additional information?

Please contact the Town's Public Information Officer Debbie Szpanka at (dszpanka@townofbluffton.com) or (Office) 843.706.4534 if you have further questions.