

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

FOR SHOPPERS

PORT ANGELES' BRING YOUR OWN BAG (BYOB) LAW

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What is the new law?

Port Angeles Municipal Code **Chapter 5.95 - Retail Bag Requirements** is a ban on thin plastic checkout bags (less than 2.25 mils) and imposes a minimum 5-cent carryout bag fee on recycled paper and other retailer provided carryout bags. The law is meant to encourage shoppers to bring their own bag rather than buying a new bag each time they shop.

Why Bring Your Own Bag (BYOB)?

BYOB was passed to address the problems associated with disposable checkout bags. Most disposable plastic bags end up in the landfill or as litter. When customers bring their own bag, they help reduce waste, prevent litter, beautify our community, and protect marine wildlife. Choosing to “bring your own bag” helps improve the health of our community and our environment.

What bags are still available?

Retailers may distribute paper checkout bags made of at least 40% recycled content. Retailers may also distribute other qualified checkout bags that are designed for long-term, multiple reuse. Any checkout bag provided to the customer will be charged a minimum fee of five cents. Other non-checkout bags are still available such as produce bags used to package meat and bulk items inside the store before purchasing, dry-cleaning bags, and tire bags.

Will I be charged if I bring my own bag to reuse?

No, you can bring any type of bag (reusable, paper, or plastic) with you when you shop and you will not be charged to use it.

Where does the carryout bag fee go?

The fee is kept by the retailer to offset the cost of providing recycled content paper or reusable bags which are usually more expensive than disposable plastic bags.

How are low-income residents impacted?

All residents are encouraged to bring their own reusable bag when shopping, but people with proof of EBT, WIC, or TANF benefits do not have to pay the fee when they receive a checkout bag.

How is the ban enforced?

Enforcement is complaint based. Residents and others may contact bdorcy@cityofpa.us or 360-417-4876 if they notice retailers are non-compliant with the law. The focus of enforcement will be on education in order to achieve compliance. If a retailer is reported, an educational visit will be conducted and warning letter issued before the noncompliance penalty of up to \$250 is considered.

SHOPPER BYOB FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

What stores are affected?

All retail stores in the city are affected by the law. This includes grocery stores, convenience stores, department stores, hardware stores, liquor stores, pharmacies, farmers markets, and others.

Can disposable plastic bags be used for takeout food?

The ordinance does apply to restaurants. However, retailers such as restaurants and grocery store service delis, can provide disposable plastic bags for prepared take-out foods and liquids intended for consumption away from the establishment. This is to safeguard public health and safety during transportation of take-out foods. Other items purchased from food establishments, such as cookbooks or collectibles, cannot be carried out in disposable plastic bags.

What's the best way to keep my reusable bags clean?

The County Health Department recommends that you wrap raw meat in plastic and throw away the plastic bag, keep reusable bags dry when not in use, wash cloth bags once a week in hot water with detergent and dry in the dryer, and clean plastic-lined reusable bags with hot water and soap and allow to air dry before storing.

What kind of reusable bag is best?

Many Life Cycle Analysis studies have found that lightweight reusable bags made from recycled plastics (polypropylene) are the most environmentally-friendly choice. Bags made from cotton canvas are resource intensive but may be extremely long-lived. There are also some lightweight bags, some of which may be of recycled content, which will not be long-lived. As with any utilitarian item, material, cost, and quality will make a huge difference, depending on how it is used. That said, the best kind of reusable bag for you is the one you actually reuse!

I reuse my plastic checkout bags for other things (trash bin liners, lunch, pet waste, etc.). What do I do now that these are banned?

In other cities with similar laws, residents generally find substitutes. Try packing lunch in a reusable bag, go without a bin liner for your small trash bins, and look for pet waste specific bags in grocery stores or in city parks. You may also use empty plastic bags from the newspaper, bread, cereal, and other packaged items.

What are other ways to reduce disposable checkout bags?

Communities are using a variety of methods to reduce disposable checkout bags. Common methods range from banning plastic bags, to banning plastic bags with a fee on paper bags (5-25 cents), to putting a fee on both plastic and paper bags (5-10 cents). Several other Washington communities have chosen the same model as Port Angeles.

How can I learn more?

Visit www.cityofpa.us for resources and information about BYOB. You can also email bdorcy@cityofpa.us or call 360-417-4876 for more information.