

TOOLKIT FOR YORK RETAILERS



The York Ordinance prohibiting distribution of single-use plastic carryout bags goes into effect on March 3, 2016. It is important to point out that while the focus of the ordinance is on plastic bags, the intent of the ordinance is not to have shoppers switch to paper bags, but to encourage and make it easy for them to switch to reusable bags. Paper bags were excluded from the ordinance in order give retailers a recyclable option for those who come into your establishment not knowing York has a ban on plastic or have come without their reusable bags for other reasons. Note: retailers are not prohibited from charging customers for paper bags.

Below are suggestions to retailers to help smooth the transition to reusable bags for your employees and customers. They are based on the experiences of other municipalities that have enacted fees or bans on plastic bags.

BENEFIT OF REUSABLE BAGS TO RETAILERS

When shoppers bring their own bags, it can lead to a cost savings for you because you will not have to purchase, store and distribute as many carryout bags to customers. You and your shoppers will be helping the environment, our oceans, and protecting human health.

A reusable bag program can offer you an additional way to create brand awareness and do some local advertising by offering your own reusable bag. Customers use attractive and functional reusable bags for many tasks, which increases your visibility throughout the community.

Municipalities have found that when people get into the habit of using reusable bags for shopping, they often begin to take other steps to reduce plastic usage. You may want to consider offering new products for your customers who are looking for alternatives for other single-use items; such as, reusable produce bags, water bottles, utensils-to-go etc.

BEFORE THE ORDINANCE EFFECTIVE DATE

If you have been using single-use plastic bags, decide what your replacement bag will be. Consider whether you plan to take one or more steps to encourage customers to use reusable bags (ideas below). If you were already using a recyclable paper bag, it is hoped you will still consider encouraging the use of reusable bags and be prepared for an increase in the number of reusable bags customers bring to you

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 March 1st.

Training your front-line employees to help customers make the shift to paper and reusable bags is very important. In other towns where bag bans or fees have taken place, press reports from retailers include stories of checkout staff taking the brunt of some customer frustration in the early days of implementation. Ensuring your staff understands the ordinance will ease the transition period for all.

Other Things to Consider

Does your product line require any special handling at checkout due to a change in bag type(s) to be used? Will using paper bags or reusables slow down packing customer purchases? Will you give customers the option of filling their own bags? Reusable bags can hold more weight and are generally larger in volume – packers need to be aware that in some cases two lighter bags may suit the customer better than one loaded bag.

CHANGING CUSTOMER BEHAVIOR

At the Register

Instead of automatically packing purchases in your store's paper bag, train staff to ask customers, *"Did you bring a bag you would like me to use today?"* or *"Would you like to purchase a reusable bag?"* You can potentially save a bag by assessing whether the purchase is small enough or prepackaged enough that you can simply ask *"Do you need (or want) a bag?"* Often when presented with the concept of not bothering with a bag at all, many people choose to skip it.

Ideas to Encourage Use of Reusable Bags

You might find one or more of these ideas good for your business.

- Display reminders in store parking lot/windows: "Do you have your reusable bags?"
- Use your email list to alert local and out-of-town customers to the new ordinance.
- Give a reusable bag away if the customer makes a purchase over a set amount.
- Have a store-branded reusable bag act as a permanent coupon for some amount of discount 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 for each paper bag to offset added cost of paper.
- Kick off the start of "no plastic bags" by giving away a raffle ticket for each purchase by a customer using a reusable bag over a fixed period of time (e.g., weekly, monthly). Promote the practice, announce the winner(s) in the store, to your email list, in the paper.

Thank you for doing your part to help make this transition a success!!

***Visit: <http://www.byobyork.org/retailers> for a copy of this toolkit
and other information for retailers.***