

## **BASICS OF PLASTIC BAG REDUCTION ORDINANCE**

- **Why are we doing this?** To reduce litter, protect ocean environments and waterways from pollution, reduce greenhouse gasses, and reduce solid waste in the waste stream
- Only applies to “checkout bags” = carryout bag **with handles**.
  - Doesn’t include newspaper bags
  - Doesn’t include bag used to wrap produce, frozen food, meat or fish.
  - Doesn’t include laundry/dry-cleaner bags
  - Doesn’t include trash can liners
- Retailers can only keep recyclable paper bags, compostable bags, or reusable bags in stock.
  - **Recyclable paper bag:**
    - 100% recyclable
    - Contains at least 40% post-consumer recycled material
    - Displays the above in a visible manner on outside of bag
  - **Compostable bag:**
    - Conforms to ASTM D6400 standard & is certified
    - Capable of decomposing at the same rate as compostable materials
  - **Reusable bag:**
    - Designed and manufactured to use more than once
    - Made of durable material or durable plastic that is at least 3.0 mils (thousandths of an inch) in thickness
- Recyclable paper bags, compostable bags, or reusable bags have to be sold for **AT LEAST 5 cents**. Retailers can charge more.
- The cost of bags must be posted/advertised within 5 feet of the checkout location.
- **Enforcement:**
  - Retail establishments 20,000 square feet and larger will begin to be inspected on December 14th, 2018
  - Retail establishments 10,000 square feet and larger will begin to be inspected on April 1st, 2019
  - Retail establishments smaller than 10,000 square feet will begin to be inspected on July 1st, 2019
- **Violations:**
  - Initial violation: warning
  - 2nd violation: \$50 fine

- 3rd or more violation: \$100 fine
- **Exemptions:**
  - **Need to fill out application form found online [boston.gov/plastic-bags](http://boston.gov/plastic-bags) by December 14th, 2018**
  - 1. No reasonable alternatives to plastic bags
  - 2. Compliance would deprive of a legally protected right
  - 3. Need to use up existing inventory of plastic bags (need to fill out exemption application monthly, instructions found on [boston.gov/plastic-bags](http://boston.gov/plastic-bags))

## **FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS**

- Is the 5 cent bag charge subject to MA sales tax?
  - Yes.
- Are there posters available to put within 5 feet of the checkout location?
  - Yes, visit [boston.gov/plastic-bags](http://boston.gov/plastic-bags) to find them in the “Documents” section
- Are bags without handles subject to the ordinance?
  - No, they are not. However, we encourage retailers to still search for environmentally friendly bags without handles.
- Where can I buy compliant bags?
  - You can find a list of certified retailers on [boston.gov/plastic-bags](http://boston.gov/plastic-bags)
- How can I get the ordinance and requirements translated into my language?
  - We are working on getting the basics of the ordinance and our flyers translated into Spanish, Haitian Creole, Traditional Chinese, Vietnamese, and Cape Verdean Creole
- Do I have to get rid of my existing plastic bags?
  - No, you can file for an exemption due to existing inventory, as long as you mail monthly update reports to prove your inventory is decreasing to Inspectional Services. Please don't throw out your existing plastic bags!