

SEATTLE BAN ON PLASTIC STRAWS AND UTENSILS TAKES EFFECT

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Seattle's ban on plastic straws and utensils took effect on July 1, after the expiration of an exemption in a 2008 law requiring one-time-use food-service items to be compostable or recyclable. The ban applies to food service businesses, including restaurants, delis, coffee shops, food trucks, cafeterias, and grocery stores.

Instead of providing plastic straws and utensils, on request, businesses may provide approved compostable alternatives for dine-in service, and compostable or recyclable take-out packaging. Though compostable plastic straws are allowed, environmental groups advocate using compostable paper-based straws. Flexible plastic straws can be provided to customers who need a straw because of medical reasons.

The law imposes fines of \$250 on businesses that fail to comply. Other U.S. cities have considered similar bans on plastic straws. A similar ban in San Francisco passed a committee vote on Monday, and goes before the full board next week.

Seattle banned the use of Styrofoam packaging in food service in 2009. Food service businesses were required to use compostable or recyclable food serviceware in 2010, provide recycling and compost bins, and sign up for collection service. Seattle Public Utilities exempted plastic utensils and straws due to a lack of compostable alternatives. That exemption expired at the end of June.

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