

SINGLE USE BAG REDUCTION & RECYCLING PROGRAM



Each year approximately six billion single use plastic carryout bags are consumed in the County of Los Angeles, the equivalent of 600 bags per person per year. Plastic bag litter makes up as much as 25 percent of the litter stream and significantly impacts our communities and the environment. In the County of Los Angeles alone, local and State governments spend tens of millions of dollars each year on prevention, cleanup, and enforcement activities to reduce litter.* Although single use plastic carryout bags are inexpensive and have other useful qualities, they have the propensity to become litter, thus overshadowing these benefits. Communities throughout the State and around the world are grappling with this issue, and searching for ways to reduce the impact that littered single use plastic bags have on their quality of life.

For this reason, on January 22, 2008, the County of Los Angeles Board of Supervisors adopted a comprehensive strategy to reduce single use bag consumption and litter while increasing recycling in the unincorporated areas of the County of Los Angeles.

The indiscriminate littering of single use plastic carryout bags is an increasing blight problem. Due to their expansive and lightweight

characteristics, littered single use plastic bags are easily carried airborne by wind, where they end up entangled in brush, tossed around along freeways, and caught on fences.**

In addition, within the County's extensive and diverse watersheds, many littered single use plastic carryout bags find their way onto local beaches and eventually into the ocean, where they have been known to impact marine life that ingest them in the following unintended ways:

- Clogging the throat, thus choking the animal.
- Artificially filling the stomach so that the animal cannot consume food, depriving them of nutrients.
- Infecting them with harmful toxins that can poison the animal.
- Entangling the animal, leading to choking, cuts, and even restricting growth.

Why reusable bags?

After evaluating the environmental, ecological, and litter impacts of various types of single use bags, it is conclusive that the widespread use of reusable bags in lieu of single use bags would be socially, ecologically, and economically beneficial. Facilitating the increased use of

reusable bags would conserve energy and natural resources, diminish plastic bag litter, and invite citizens to actively participate in practices that promote a clean and sustainable environment.

What you can do?

With so many billions of bags being consumed each year, addressing the issue of plastic bag litter may seem like a daunting task. The good news is that single use plastic bag litter is caused by individual actions, and individual actions can and will make a huge difference in stemming the tide of single use plastic bag litter. Below are some simple but important things you can do to protect our environment:

- Use reusable bags whenever and wherever you shop. Keep one or two in your car to make it easy. Urge your friends and family to get into the reusable habit.
- Avoid getting more bags than you need, and make sure to dispose of your bags properly.
- Bring clean single use plastic bags to any large supermarket or retail store with a pharmacy for recycling. Put bags into one bag and tie it closed to keep bags from unintentionally flying away.

collect plastic bags at curbside for recycling.

3. Of curbside collected bags, approximately 90% of the collected and taken to recycling facilities are not recycled, but instead taken to landfills for the following reasons:

Single use plastic carryout bags have a high contamination rate due to reuse as a household trash bin liner or by coming into contact with other contaminants (e.g., pet waste) when placed in the collection bin. As the contamination rate increases, the quality of the plastic resin is reduced.

Single use plastic carryout bags interfere with the machinery and have a tendency to jam the screens used to separate materials.

It is not cost efficient to recycle single use plastic carryout bags due to lack of suitable markets. The domestic market for single use plastic carryout bags is extremely limited, especially in California.

4. The Single Use Bag Reduction and Recycling Program focuses on at-store recycling, keeping bags free of intermingling and contamination, thereby increasing the value of the commodity and making it more likely the bags will be recycled.

Source: LA County



Promoting at-store recycling of single use plastic bags

1. Approximately 6 billion single use plastic bags are used in LA County each year. As a result, 45,000 tons of single use plastic bags are disposed of by residents countywide each year.

2. Most of the 88 cities in the County of Los Angeles do not

