

Plastic bag ban begins today in LB

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LONG BEACH - Shoppers get a brand new bag - a tote bag that is - because Long Beach's new ordinance banning the use of plastic carryout bags goes into effect today.

The ban, enacted by the City Council in May, makes Long Beach the 12th city or county in California to restrict plastic bags since San Francisco's in 2007.

The intent of the ordinance is to reduce litter, plastic debris in waterways and storm drains and waste transported to landfills.

About 66 larger retailers, such as supermarkets, drugstore chains and stores including Target and Walmart, are now banned from distributing the bags.

"I think it's a good thing and a bad thing, because I think they waited a little too late for it to make a big difference," said Willie Varnado, a local chef, who was shopping at Albertsons at Sixth Street and Long Beach Boulevard. "Everybody's trying to go green, but why didn't this happen a long time ago? They waited until they polluted the ocean with all the debris, and now they want to do something about it."

According to the city, a high-quality reusable tote can replace 600 plastic carryout bags over its lifetime.

"I hope this is a change forever, I don't know how it's going to go, but I hope to change forever," he said.

It's important to keep the reusable bags clean by washing them as frequently as possible. It is suggested that consumers designate one bag for meat products and another for produce.

"I don't think it will be more inconvenient, but it is another way to make money, because, if we don't have the plastic bags, we will have to buy their bags," Varnado said. "It's not saving us money because you still have to spend money. It's only affecting the poor."

Retailers are allowed to provide customers with paper bags but must charge 10 cents per bag under the ordinance.

Stores are required to provide a free reusable bag or paper bag for customers participating either in the California Special Supplemental Food Program for Women, Infants, and Children or the Supplemental Food Program.

About 2,000 smaller corner markets, liquor stores and others must comply with the ban beginning Jan. 1.

"I'm behind it 100percent," said Mel, a Walmart customer who did not give a last name. "I think it's a great idea for the environment."

Businesses not offering perishable foods, such as clothing stores and sporting-goods outlets, are exempt.

In an effort to raise awareness about the ban, Albertsons and environmental group Heal the Bay will distribute hundreds of free reusable bags to shoppers from noon to 2 p.m. today at Albertsons, 101 E. Willow St., Long Beach.

The following stores will also participate in bag giveaways:

Albertsons

Through Aug. 9, shoppers can earn a free reusable bag, while supplies last, when they spend \$30 or more on qualifying products in a single transaction with their Preferred Savings Card. Participating locations include:

6255 E. Second St.

644 Redondo Blvd.

101 E. Willow St.

6235 E. Spring St.

450 Long Beach Blvd.

Food 4 Less

Free reusable bags will be given to shoppers today, while supplies last.

Consumers at the participating locations listed below are eligible for one free reusable bag per family.

6700 Cherry Ave.

2185 South St.

Target

Free reusable bags will be given to shoppers today, while supplies last. One free bag per purchase at the following Target locations:

6750 Cherry Ave.

2270 N. Bellflower Blvd.

Target is also offering its signature reusable bags for 50 cents each during the month of August. These reusable bags are regularly priced at 99 cents each.

For more information on the ban, call 562-570-2876 visit www.litterfreelb.org or email tote@litterfreelb.org.

The website contains additional information like, a listing of reusable shopping bag giveaway events and the proper use and care of the reusable bags.

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