



ENVIRONMENTALLY PREFERABLE FOOD PACKAGING ORDINANCE

Effective January 1, 2010

Frequently Asked Questions

What does the Ordinance Require?

- All retail food vendors, restaurants, and County facilities can no longer provide prepared or take-out food in, on or with disposable food packaging that contains Styrofoam.
- Biodegradable food packaging is required when using disposable food packaging, which includes cold cups, plates, hinge containers, bowls, trays, cartons, cups, cutlery, straws, lids, bags.

What's Wrong with Styrofoam?

- Styrene, a compound in Styrofoam, is a known hazardous substance and a suspected carcinogen. It leaches from containers into the food or liquid it contains, and is detectable in the tissue of every man, woman and child in the U.S.
- In California, 165,000 tons of Styrofoam are used for food packaging annually.
- Styrofoam “can have serious impacts on human health, wildlife, the environment, and the economy,” according to EPA.
- Styrofoam does not bio-degrade and there is no meaningful recycling of Styrofoam.
- The polystyrene manufacturing process is the 5th largest creator of hazardous waste, and ranks second in energy consumption and greenhouse gas emissions.



Which Containers are Allowed?

- **Durable Ware:** The best choice for the environment is re-use, so consider washable food service whenever possible.
- **Bio-plastics** and compostables, certified by the Biodegradable Products Institute (BPI). (See reverse).
- **Uncoated Paper and Coated Paper** (if coating is BPI certified)
- **Cardboard**

Do the Alternatives Cost More?

In many cases, the environmentally preferable alternatives are the same cost as the conventional products, and in some cases, they cost less. For alternatives that are more expensive, a small “take-out” fee can cover the cost of eco-friendly containers. Exemptions can be made if the environmentally friendly alternative costs 15% or more than the conventional choice (although Styrofoam is *always* prohibited). Contact the Environmental Health Services Division at the County of Marin: 499-6907.

What are the Penalties for Non-Compliance?

The first violation is \$108, 2nd violation is \$324, and \$541 for each additional violation.

Sources for Environmentally Preferable Alternatives

Ask your sales representative if they have acceptable containers. If not, ask them to begin carrying them. Below are some of the many sources of environmentally preferable disposable food packaging.

Company	Website	City, State	Products
Excellent Packaging	www.excellentpackaging.com	Richmond, CA	Bowls, plates, cups, soup containers, utensils
World Centric	http://worldcentric.org	Palo Alto, CA	Bowls, plates, cups, , clamshells, utensils
Green Earth Office Supply	http://greenearthofficesupply	Redwood Estates & Santa Clara, CA	Bowls, plates, cups, soup containers, utensils, straws, trash bags, stir sticks
Mr. Take Out Bags	www.mrtakeoutbags.com	Pittsburgh, PA	Bags, plates, cups, cutlery, lids
Let's Go Green	http://letszogreen.biz	Snellville, GA	Cups, soup containers
Food Service Warehouse	www.foodservicewarehouse.com	Greenwood Village, CO	Cups, bowls, plates, cutlery, napkins, straws
Aardvark Paper Straws	http://www.aardvarkstraws.com/	Ft. Wayne, IN	Straws, stir sticks

This is a very short list of companies that provide environmentally preferable packaging and are listed for reference only. The County of Marin does not endorse any specific business.

A complete listing of products certified by Biodegradable Products Institute (BPI) can be found here: <http://www.bpiworld.org/BPI-Public/Approved/2.html>

Original research and text for this FAQ brochure provided by Marin County Youth Commission.