



PLASTIC STRAW BAN



What food service businesses are affected by the ban?

Food service businesses that are full- and limited-service restaurants, fast-food restaurants, cafés, delicatessens, coffee shops, supermarkets, grocery stores, vending trucks or carts, food trucks, business or institutional cafeterias (including those operated on behalf of County departments and agencies), and other businesses selling or providing food within the County for consumption on or off the premises.

Why is this bill needed?

Plastic straws and stirrers are not recyclable, are a major component of roadside and marine litter, and do not decompose in the natural environment. They wash into the waterways and oceans, polluting the water and killing marine life as they break into smaller and smaller pieces. Used for a short time, they remain in the environment forever. There are alternatives with less environmental impact – reusable straws, paper straws that decompose in the environment, and dispensing with straws altogether when not needed. This ban contributes to the County's source reduction efforts in its 10-Year Solid Waste Management Plan and addresses objectives of Maryland's 2014 Zero Waste Plan.

When will the law go into effect?

The law will become effective July 1st, 2020.

How will the law be enforced?

Prince George's County Recycling Inspectors will conduct random visits to Food Service and/or Retail Businesses, and will issue warnings and/or fines to food service providers using noncompliant products starting on January 1st, 2021.

What are the penalties for non-compliance?

For a first time violation, businesses will receive a warning, the second violation will garner a \$250 fine, and a third violation within a twelve-month period, a \$1,000 fine. Each day the violation exists is a separate offense.

What products can I use instead of single-use plastic straws and stirrers?

Alternatives include paper and other straws that are "home compostable"; and reusable straws made from metal, glass, bamboo, silicon, or rigid plastic. Stirrers made of wood are home compostable.

How do I know which straws and stirrers are compliant with the compostable requirement?

Non-plastic products or materials that are compostable will break down into usable compost. Plastic products must be home compostable as defined in Section 9-2102(b)(2) of the Environment Article of the Annotated Code of Maryland. Specifically, the product must meet: (i) the OK Compost Home certification standard adopted by Vincotte¹; and (ii) any applicable labeling guidelines in the federal Guides for the Use of Environmental Marketing Claims.



¹ "Vincotte" is a Belgian-accredited inspection certification organization. These requirements are taken directly from the Maryland Code.



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Are compostable plastic straws made of PLA (#7) plastic compliant with the law?

No. PLA #7 plastic straws can be aerobically composted in municipal and industrial facilities (meeting the ASTM D6400 standard²), but when left in the natural environment on land, in waterways, or in a backyard compost bin, they do not decompose and behave in much the same way as non-compostable plastic straws.

What about pre-packaged products with straws, like juice boxes? Are those banned?

No. The law does not apply to beverages that have a plastic straw affixed during the pre-packaging process and received by the Food Service or Retail Business with the plastic straw attached.

How may I serve customers who need a plastic straw for physical or medical reasons?

The County Code does not apply where it would interfere with the accommodation of any individual's physical or medical needs. Food Service Businesses are allowed to keep a limited stock of plastic straws available to accommodate any individual's physical or medical needs and remain compliant with local, State, and Federal disability rights laws.

Who can I contact for more information?

Please contact the Department of Environment, Recycling Section, Inspection Unit at: (301) 883-3635 or visit our website www.princegeorgescountymd.gov.



² ASTM International is an international standards organization.