



PRESS RELEASE
For Immediate Release

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REUSABLE BAGS ARE ONCE AGAIN ALLOWED IN STORES

SANTA ROSA – July 13, 2020 – The countywide Zero Waste Sonoma Carryout Bags Ordinance 2014-2, effective September 1, 2014, prohibits grocery stores and retail establishments from providing customers with single-use plastic carryout bags at point-of-sale or checkout. In addition, the ordinance requires a minimum 10¢ charge on all compliant recycled paper bags.

As a result of COVID-19, on April 23, 2020, Governor Newsom issued Executive Order N-54-20 which included a 60-day suspension of California’s plastic bag ban, including charging for single-use paper bags. The local ordinance was temporarily postponed so that store operators could adhere to the Order administered by the Sonoma County Health Officer prohibiting reusable bags.

Starting June 18, 2020, under an updated Order of the Sonoma County Health Officer, establishments may once again allow reusable bags, but customers are required to bag their own purchases. To further limit unnecessary exposure to employees, it is recommended that customers leave their bags inside a cart or basket, and refrain from placing personal bags onto high-touch surfaces such as checkout counters and conveyor belts. If possible, it is also recommended to wash bags in between uses.

Zero Waste Sonoma has not made any changes to the existing Carryout Bags Ordinance and retailers who have temporarily waived required bag charges must reinstate the charges and may begin to allow customers to use their personal reusable bags while adhering to safety protocols.

Zero Waste Sonoma is sensitive to the health and safety of our residents, and at the same time, is aware of a significant increase in single-use items as a result of the pandemic. Single-use plastic items escape into our environment and waterways and threaten habitat and wildlife at a far higher rate than their durable, reusable counterparts. As an organization whose mission is to reduce waste and divert material from landfill, we wish to remind retailers and shoppers in Sonoma County that reusable bags are still the best option and that they are safe to use when protocol is followed.

For more information, updates, and downloadable materials for store operators, visit www.zerowastesonoma.gov/carryoutbags.

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