

Polystyrene Bylaw

Town of Reading

Department of Public Health

What is Changing?



Reading Town Meeting passed a new bylaw that prohibits the use and distribution of disposable polystyrene food service items or containers. Enforcement of the bylaw starts February 22, 2024.

Polystyrene is a particular type of plastic. It may be labelled with the recycling number “6” or “PS 6.” It comes in two forms:

Foam Polystyrene is blown polystyrene and expanded and extruded foams (sometimes called “Styrofoam”). Foam Polystyrene is generally used to make opaque cups, bowls, plates, trays, clam shell containers, meat trays, and egg cartons.

Rigid Polystyrene is clear or solid polystyrene. Rigid Polystyrene is generally used to make clear clamshell containers, and clear or colored cups, plates, straws, lids, and utensils.

Why prohibit polystyrene?

- Polystyrene is made from a probable carcinogen which can leach out of polystyrene products, especially with increased temperature and with certain foods (alcohol, oils, or fat).
- Polystyrene is almost never recycled due to its low value. The foam form is not accepted in curbside recycling programs.
- Polystyrene is not biodegradable.
- Polystyrene harms wild and domesticated animals who mistake it for food.

No Longer Acceptable

Polystyrene products no longer acceptable after ban begins...



What is the alternative?

These same food service items are available in alternative materials that are perfectly acceptable under the bylaw. Examples of these alternative materials include:

- Paper/cardboard
- Foil
- Plant-based materials
- Compostable containers
- Other plastics (#1,#2,#3,#4,#5, and #7)

Alternatives

Paper Products:



Foil Products:



Other Plastics:



Enforcement starts

February 22, 2024

If you use or provide single-use food service items, they are likely made of several different materials, and some of your items may be made of polystyrene. You need to take an inventory of your items to determine how you are affected by this new bylaw.

The bylaw does not apply to prepackaged food or beverage products bought from another supplier. Food or beverage products that came to you already packaged in a polystyrene container may be distributed in those containers.

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