



# Consumer FAQs

## Plastic Carryout Bag Ban and At-Store Recycling Program

**Q: Which stores are affected by the UPDATED plastic carryout bag ban after July 1, 2022?**

A: **All retail stores in Delaware** must comply with the Plastic Carryout Bag Ban per [7 Del.C. §6099A](#). Restaurants are not subject to the ban.

**Q: My store replaced its plastic bags with paper bags. Is the store allowed to do this?**

A: Yes. Paper bags were not affected by this legislation and are an acceptable alternative for plastic carryout bags. Reuse paper bags when possible. Paper bags that are no longer reusable can be recycled in your curbside recycling cart.

**Q: What will retail stores be providing me at checkout?**

A: At checkout, retail stores may offer reusable bags or paper bags or they may decide not to provide any bags for customers. **Plastic film bags, regardless of thickness, are no longer allowed.** It is best practice for customers to bring their own reusable bags into the store.

**Q: Will stores charge me a fee for the reusable bags they provide at point of sale?**

A: Maybe. The law allows retail stores to charge a fee for the bags they provide at point of sale but does not require it.

**Q: Can my store provide me a bag that has already been used?**

A: No. The bags provided by the retail store should be new and not reused.

**Q: Does this mean my meat and fruit are loose in my bag?**

A: No. Several specific plastic bags used within grocery stores, including those used for bulk items such as fruits/vegetables as well as bags used to cover meat, can continue to be provided by stores.

**Q: Will the stores need to bag my purchases differently under this law?**

A: No. Reusable bags tend to be larger than single-use plastic carryout bags, so customers should be able to leave the store with fewer bags. Since the bags available at checkout can be used for all the items that a plastic carryout bag can be used for, there should be no impact on how store employees bag merchandise.

**Q: If I'm using my own bags, what should I do?**

A: DNREC encourages customers to bring their own reusable bags when shopping and follow best practices in doing so. For example, customers may bag their items so employees don't come in contact with the bags, and employees should sanitize the checkout area as per their sanitizing policy. Remember to clean your empty bags at home between shopping trips. Based on DNREC's review of studies and practices encouraged by the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, these steps help maximize everyone's safety while supporting reusable bags.

**Q: I've heard that reusable bags can spread disease. Should I be concerned?**

A: DNREC encourages all customers to turn their reusable plastic bags inside out when they get home, wipe them down with a disinfecting wipe and reuse them on future trips to the store. Several studies have shown that reusable bags which were not cleaned or sanitized, have the potential to spread disease. However, these same studies concluded that washing bags in the laundry or disinfecting them with a cleaning wipe removed 99% of bacteria.

**Q: How do I dispose of my current supply of plastic film bags?**

A: **Plastic carryout bags CANNOT go into your curbside recycling cart at home.** Instead, return them to a store with an At-Store Recycling Program to be recycled. Retail stores that offer exempt plastic bags to consumers for bulk items such as fruits/vegetables – which are still allowed by this law – are required to provide an At-Store Recycling Program for plastic bags and film.

Plastic bag and film recycling containers are typically located near the entrance or by the customer service in the store. All plastic bags and film you cannot reuse anymore should be recycled at these locations. See [de.gov/bags](https://de.gov/bags) for a list of accepted items.

**Q: My store doesn't have an At-Store Plastic Bag Recycling Program. Why?**

A: If that retail store no longer provides plastic bags, including the exempt bags, they are not required to have a program to collect bags from consumers. If you're concerned that a retail store should be participating, please contact DNREC at 302-739-9403 or [recycle@delaware.gov](mailto:recycle@delaware.gov), and an inspection of that store will be conducted.

**Q: What is the benefit of banning plastic carryout bags?**

A: The plastic carryout bag ban is intended to reduce beach and roadside litter and save landfill space. An additional benefit is the decrease in recycling facility shutdowns due to plastic bags stuck in machinery. By decreasing the number of plastic carryout bags distributed, a large portion of plastic waste can be avoided. This directly helps the environment by reducing the amount of unsightly plastic bags on our roads and waterways that can harm us and our wildlife

**Q. How do I learn more and stay updated on this topic?**

A: Visit [de.gov/bags](https://de.gov/bags) for more information. Follow [@DelawareDNREC](https://twitter.com/DelawareDNREC) on social media for the latest updates.

