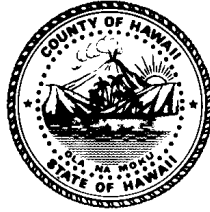


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MEDIA RELEASE: For Immediate Release

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Plastic Bag Reduction Ordinance Takes Effect Tomorrow

The Hawai'i County Plastic Bag Reduction Ordinance takes effect tomorrow, January 17, 2013. The purpose of the ordinance is to reduce the usage of single-use plastic bags by prohibiting their distribution at store checkouts and encouraging the usage of reusable bags.

To ease the transition for consumers and retailers, single-use plastic bags will be allowed during the first year if a fee is charged for each bag. The businesses set the fee and keep the revenue. Many stores are choosing to stop using plastic bags and are already encouraging customers to bring their own reusable bags. One high quality reusable bag can replace hundreds of single-use plastic bags over its lifetime. In the long term, the cost of a reusable bag can be lower than the cost of the single-use plastic bags it replaces.

The ordinance exempts plastic bags without handles that are used for retail items such as meat, produce, bulk food items, garments, and prescription drugs. It also exempts non-profit organizations and non-incorporated community booster organizations. Paper bags are still permitted under the ordinance.

If a business violates the ordinance, a warning letter will be issued. A second violation will result in a civil fine of \$250 per day. The third violation will result in a civil fine of \$500 per day and subsequent violations will result in civil fines of \$1,000 per day.

Environmental problems posed by plastic bags warrant the implementation of this type of law and it is consistent with the County's General Plan, which implores the County to "take positive action to further maintain the quality of the environment." It is an important milestone on the County's path toward Zero Waste, a commitment to protecting our island.

All of Hawai'i's counties have passed plastic bag reduction ordinances, joining a growing list of cities, counties, and nations around the world taking similar initiatives including Los Angeles, San Francisco, Portland (Oregon) and parts of Mexico, Germany, Italy and China.

For more information, please visit HawaiiZeroWaste.com where you can download the ordinance, rules and outreach materials. For questions and additional information about the new ordinance, please contact the Department of Environmental Management's Solid Waste and Recycling Offices at bring-ur-bag@co.hawaii.hi.us or (808) 961-8270.

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