

Green To Go Frequently Asked Questions

What is Green to Go?

The City of Minneapolis ordinance which:

- Bans polystyrene.
- Requires food and beverages prepared for immediate consumption and to-go be placed in environmentally acceptable packaging, which is packaging or containers that are reuseable, recyclable, or compostable.
- Requires recyclable materials to be recycled.
- Required compostable plastic to be composted.

What packaging is not allowed? Polystyrene

- Expanded polystyrene foam (commonly known as Styrofoam™)
- Rigid polystyrene (plastic #6)

What products are reuseable and returnable?

Food or beverage containers or packages that can be refilled at a retail location or returned to the distributor for reuse at least once as a container for the same food or beverage. Includes: water bottles, growlers, milk containers and bulk product packaging.

What products are recyclable?

Packaging to be recycled. Includes: glass bottles, aluminum cans and some plastic food and beverage packaging. Preferable plastic packaging is:

- Polyethylene Terephthalate (#1 PET or PETE)
- High Density Polyethylene (#2 HDPE)
- Polypropylene (#5 PP)

What products are compostable?

- Products which are the BPI certified or meet ASTM standards D6400 or D6868.
- Unlined paper

BPI = Biodegradable Products Institute <http://www.bpiworld.org/BPI-Public/Program.html>

ATSM = American Society for Testing and Materials <http://www.astm.org/>

What about utensils, straws and stir sticks?

These products are not packaging. They do not need to be reuseable, recyclable or compostable.

If you need this material in an alternative format please call the Minneapolis Health Department at (612) 673-2301 or email health@minneapolismn.gov. Deaf and hard-of-hearing persons may use a relay service to call 311 agents at (612) 673-3000. TTY users may call (612) 673-2157 or (612) 673-2626. Attention: If you have any questions regarding this material please call 311 or (612) 673-2301; Hmong - Ceeb toom. Yog koj xav tau kev pab txhais cov xov no rau koj dawb, hu (612) 673-2800; Spanish - Atención. Si desea recibir asistencia gratuita para traducir esta información, llame al teléfono (612) 673-2700; Somali - Ogow. Haddii aad dooneyso in lagaa kaalmeeyo tarjamadda macluumaadkani oo lacag la' aan wac (612) 673-3500.

Are any products are exempt from the ordinance?

- Plastic films less than 10 mils thick. 10 mils is about the thickness of two-and-a-half sheets of paper.
- Foods prepackaged by the manufacturer, producer or distributor

The following products are temporarily exempt.

- Paper products lined with polyethylene (PE) are allowed until April 22, 2017, (Earth Day) to allow for full citywide implementation of organics collections. Common PE lined paper products are hot and cold beverage cups and soup containers.
- Lids for polyethylene (PE) lined hot cups and containers (such as soup containers) are exempt until April 22, 2017 (Earth Day).
- Lids for polyethylene (PE) lined cold cups are exempt until April 22, 2016 (Earth Day).

Product exemptions will be reviewed annually as required by the ordinance.

Do catering companies have to comply with Green To Go?

Catering companies licensed by the City of Minneapolis, another city or the state do not have to comply with Green To Go. If a restaurant also does catering, the restaurant needs to comply with the ordinance, but the catering business is not required to comply.

Are any businesses exempt from the ordinance?

Hospitals and nursing homes are exempt. They do not need to comply with the ordinance.

Are products marked degradable, bio-degradable, oxo-degradable, earth friendly, acceptable?

No. Items labeled as biodegradable, oxo-degradable, degradable, earth friendly, or other “green” sounding terms are not compostable. These products fragment into smaller and smaller pieces of plastic, which at this time cannot be removed from the environment.

Compostable products need to be BPI certified or meet ASTM standards D6400 or D6868 standards to comply with the City of Minneapolis Green To Go ordinance.

What is polystyrene?

Polystyrene is commonly found in two forms: expanded and rigid.

Expanded polystyrene is a lightweight foam product, commonly known as Styrofoam™.

Rigid polystyrene is a plastic, often found as black or clear plastic. It is marked with the #6 recycling symbol.



Why are plastics #1, 2, and 5 preferred?

There is a robust market for these plastics.

When does food need to be put in environmentally acceptable packaging?

When food is prepared for immediate consumption and packaged on-site.

What is immediate consumption?

Immediate consumption is food packaged onsite that is intended to be consumed immediately or taken to go that does not need any additional preparation.

Are aluminum foil and pans recyclable?

If the aluminum foil or pans are clean, they are recyclable.

If they are dirty, they are trash.

If polystyrene is banned, why do I still find foam packaging and plastic #6 and containers?

The ordinance applies to food prepared for immediate consumption and packaged on-site. Product packaged by a manufacturer or at an off-site commissary might be in non-compliant packaging or containers. Examples of products that might be found in non-complaint packaging are:

- Raw meat
- A whole rotisserie chicken
- A whole sheet cake

Why does leftover food need to be emptied out of recyclable containers?

Food scraps contaminate recyclable products. Too much food contamination can result in a load of recyclable material being rejected by the recycling company. In that case the material is not recycled. Instead, the load becomes trash.

How do you make a complaint if you receive food in a foam (Styrofoam™) container? Call 311 or send an email to minneapolis311@minneapolismn.gov. However, businesses are allowed to use up existing supplies of non-compliant products.

What are the plastic acronyms?

HDPE - High Density Polyethylene, plastic #2. Commonly used for milk and detergent bottles.

PE – Polyethylene is a plastic coating used on some paper food-service items (for example cups, soup bowls, to-go containers, etc.) PE lined paper products are not recyclable or compostable and should be placed in the trash.

PET/PETE - Polyethylene Terephthalate, plastic #1. Commonly used for beverage bottles. Plastic sauce containers, cups, and clamshells are commonly made with PET or PP

PLA - Poly lactic acid. Compostable plastic made from corn or other renewable resource. Paper products lined with PLA plastic that meet the ASTM D6868 standard are fully compostable.

PP – Polypropylene, plastic #5. Plastic sauce containers, cups, and clamshells are commonly made with PP, PET, or PS plastic. Yogurt cups, cottage cheese, sour cream and butter and margarine tubs are several household items commonly made out of PP plastic.

PS – Polystyrene - Commonly found in two forms: expanded and rigid.

Expanded polystyrene is a lightweight foam product. Rigid polystyrene is a plastic, often found as black or clear plastic. It is marked with the #6 recycling symbol.



What if a building does not have room for an additional dumpster for recycling or organics collection?

Some buildings have a small loading dock or trash collection area. The city is working with building owners to allow them time to work out solutions to trash, recycling, and organics collection issues. Some businesses may need to use recyclable containers and delay adding compostable containers until their building's trash collection area is able to accommodate additional dumpsters.

If you do not control the waste and recycling system at the building (ex. multi-use building), contact the property manager/owner to discuss necessary changes to the system for compliance with Green To Go.

Contact Hennepin County for free signs and additional information on Business Recycling. Hennepin County offers on-site assistance, and grants to add or improve recycling and organics recycling programs. Visit www.hennepin.us/businessrecycling for more information.

Questions about Green To Go?

Call 311 (outside of Minneapolis call 612-673-3000) or send an email to food@minneapolismn.gov