

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Single Use Plastic Bags, Utensils and Styrofoam Regulation and Minimization
Ordinance [Whitpain Township Ordinance No. 416](#)

Why was this ordinance passed?

Looking toward a more sustainable future, the Whitpain Township Board of Supervisors passed this ordinance to regulate and minimize single use plastic bags, utensils and expanded polystyrene (aka Styrofoam). By promoting the use of reusable alternatives, the Township aims to curb litter in our community, protect local waterways, reduce greenhouse gas emissions and reduce solid waste generation.

When does the ordinance go into effect?

The ordinance was enacted 10/15/2024

Signage requirement by businesses effective 4/30/2025

The ordinance enforcement date is 11/1/2025

What is regulated by this ordinance?

- Single use plastic bags will no longer be offered at point of sale.
- Paper bags must be made available at point of sale for a minimum fee of \$0.15 per bag
- Reusable bags can be made available at point of sale for a minimum fee of \$0.15 per bag
- Expanded Polystyrene (Styrofoam) food service containers, including but not limited to food containers, plates, cups, trays and clamshells, will no longer be offered.
- Plastic utensils, including but limited to, forks, spoons knives, chopsticks, beverage spill plugs, toothpicks, novelty cocktail accessories will be offered **by request only**.

How can consumers avoid the \$0.15 fee on paper bags?

To avoid the fee, residents can simply bring their own reusable bags to use at checkout or pickup.

Does the bag fee need to be charged for takeout and delivery?

Yes.

What are the signage requirements for businesses?

Retail establishments are required to post signs at all points of sale informing customers that single use plastic bags will no longer be provided as of 11/1/2025. Businesses can download the sign at [whitpaintownship.org](#)

Can I use my stock of plastic bags and Styrofoam supplies before making the switch?

A one year period is given to use up existing stock of supplies and prepare for alternatives by the ordinance enforcement date of 11/1/2025.

Which type of businesses does this effect?

All retail establishments within Whitpain Township including but not limited to supermarkets, convenience stores, service stations, delicatessens, department stores, clothing stores, restaurants, pharmacies, food trucks, and delivery services.

Are there exceptions to this ordinance?

Exempted bags include:

- Produce bags to package bulk items such as fruit, vegetables, nuts, grains or candy.
- Bags used to wrap meats or fish, prepared food or bakery goods
- Bags used that contain live animals such as fish or insects sold in pet stores
- Bags already packaged at the time of manufacturing the product
- Newspaper delivery bags
- Dry cleaning bags

Exempted Expanded Polystyrene (aka Styrofoam) containers include:

- Food or beverages that have been packaged in Expanded Polystyrene outside the Township before receipt by a food service establishment or store.
- Expanded Polystyrene products used to package raw, uncooked, or butchered meat, fish, poultry or seafood
- Non-foam polystyrene food service products (meaning a rigid plastic product, recycling #6, for example takeout beverage lids)

What about Single Use Plastic Utensils?

Retail establishments may only provide plastic utensils by the request of the customer as of 11/1/2025. Utensils will not automatically be added to take out/delivery orders or displayed at deli counters, salad bars, etc.

What about plastic straws?

This ordinance does not regulate plastic straws, so restaurants can continue using the straws of their choice.

What can businesses charge for paper and reusable bags?

Businesses must charge a minimum of \$0.15 for paper and/or a reusable bag. Any charge for a paper and/or reusable bag is to be stated on a receipt provided to the customer at the time of sale and will be labeled "Carry Out Bag Charge".

Who is getting the \$0.15 per paper bag fee? Do I have to charge customers for this?

Businesses keep the \$0.15 (minimum) fee. The purpose of the fee is to offset the added costs from switching to a more sustainable bag. It also encourages customers to bring their own bag or skip an unnecessary one. The intent is not to transition to paper bags, but to eliminate wasteful distribution of unnecessary bags of all materials.

My business was already using paper bags before the ordinance went into effect, do I still need to charge a fee?

Yes, a minimum of \$0.15 per bag fee must be charged. This is to encourage consumers to bring their own reusable bags, rather than using a single-use plastic bag.

Are there any exceptions for Retail Establishments to this ordinance?

Upon written request of the retail establishment the Board of Supervisors may, at its sole discretion, exempt a retail establishment for a period of not more than one year upon the finding of the Board that the requirements of this section would cause undue hardship to the retail establishment.

What is the fine for violating this ordinance?

Businesses violating the terms of the ordinance will first be warned in writing, then fined \$50 for the first violation, \$100 for the second violation, then \$250 for third and successive violations.

