



Contact: Brenda Duran
bduran@bos.lacounty.gov
213.974.1746

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Los Angeles County Kicks Off Ordinance for Sustainable Food Ware

Approved Measure Aims to Reduce Use of Harmful Fossil Fuels

LOS ANGELES - The County of Los Angeles begins today implementing an ordinance that requires all food-service containers, cups, dishes and cutlery distributed by restaurants and food facilities in unincorporated areas be recyclable or compostable.

The Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors approved the measure in April 2022 to reduce plastic blight, unburden landfills and reduce our dependence on harmful fossil fuels. The vote made Los Angeles County the largest municipality in the nation to take aggressive action against the scourge of single-use plastics.

The ordinance requires full-service restaurants to use reusable food service ware for dine-in customers. It also prohibits the sale or rental of single-use coolers, packaging and plastic peanuts, and pool toys (unless products are encased in durable material).

Food facilities must begin complying on May 1. Food trucks will have an additional six months to comply. Operators that can demonstrate extreme financial hardship or the inability to serve food safely in alternative packaging can apply for waivers.

Enforcement will initially be complaint-based, prioritizing education and working with businesses to transition to sustainable, takeout food ware. After the first year of implementation, the County will evaluate whether additional measures are needed to support businesses to reduce waste. As a last resort, violations may be subject to fines of up to \$100 per day, up to a maximum of \$1,000 per year.

Nearly 100 million plastic utensils are discarded across the United States each year, according to [studies](#). But only an estimated 15% of single-use plastic items in California are recycled. Most recycling facilities in greater L.A. do not accept food service ware of any kind because of their size and contamination. It's far easier for producers to just use fossil fuels to create so-called "virgin plastic."

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New York City has spent upward of [\\$43 million](#) in taxpayer funds each year to dispose of single-use plastics.

“California communities spend hundreds of millions of dollars each year on litter cleanup and waste prevention programs,” said Rita Kampalath, acting Chief Sustainability Officer for Los Angeles County. “But these strategies cannot keep pace with the rapid proliferation of single-use items. This ordinance will save taxpayer dollars and free up dwindling land space.”

More than 1 million residents live in unincorporated Los Angeles County, which represents two-thirds of the County’s land.

For more details about the ordinance, please read this [FAQ](#).

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