

Sorting it out: Starting Thursday plastic at the landfill is a no-no

[By Barry Smith / Times-News](#)

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RALEIGH — A new state law that starts on Thursday bans plastic bottles, oil filters and wooden pallets from landfills in North Carolina.

Well, ban is a strong word for those now frantically sorting through their trash. State and local officials say that the law is designed to encourage environmental responsibility and promote a growing recycling industry in North Carolina, not to catch people mixing plastic bottles within their trash.

But don't do it anyway.

"We're not trashcan cops," said Paul Crissman, chief of the solid waste section at the state's Division of Waste Management. "We're not going to tear open individual trash bags."

Crissman said the state and local solid waste officials are trying to educate and encourage compliance, not catch someone and fine them.

Another goal of the law is to provide materials for the state's growing recycling industry, Crissman said.

"This is going to help the state utilize resources in a more environmentally appropriate fashion," Crissman said.

"Widespread compliance with the plastic bottle disposal ban will ensure a flow of plastic bottles to meet market demand for the materials and will result in additional job creation through the expansion of recycling collection companies," said Scott Mouw with the Division of Pollution Prevention and Environmental Assistance.

"This really is an educational type issue more than it is anything else," said Craig Honeycutt, Alamance County manager. "Unless it's something that is absolutely blatant, we're not checking every load."

Crissman said the division is authorized by law to assess and administrative fine of anywhere from \$0 to \$15,000, but emphasized that the higher figure would not be charged for someone putting plastic bottles in a landfill.

"It would not be that much under any circumstances for bottles," Crissman said.