

'We're not trashcan cops'

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SHELBY — Banning plastic bottles, oil filters and wooden pallets from landfills in North Carolina is intended to encourage environmental responsibility and promote a growing recycling industry in North Carolina, not to catch people mixing plastic bottles within their trash.

"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."

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.

Sam Lockridge, solid waste manager in Cleveland County, said that the new law would be enforced by providing education and opportunity for people to recycle, not by policing trash.

"We've been doing this for 18 years, collecting plastic bottles," Lockridge said. "It's not anything new to us."

If you show up as a hauler, and you have a massive amount of this banned material, then you're going to draw some attention, 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.

CLARIFICATION

Some items shown in the illustration that appeared with Thursday's story about changes to North Carolina's landfill regulations are not included in the new law.

The change applies to the "plastic bottle," defined as a container with the neck narrower than its body.

Any plastic bottle marked with recycle codes 1 through 7 should be recycled.

The new law does not prohibit Styrofoam containers, such as egg cartons, and other plastics in Nos. 3 through 7 that do not fit the “plastic bottle” definition above.

If you have questions about what you can continue to throw away and what must be recycled, call the Cleveland County landfill office at 704-482-9061, or the state recycling office, 919-715-6512.

From N.C. General Statute 130 A-309.10

Items prohibited in landfills:

(10) **(Effective October 1, 2009)** Motor vehicle oil filters.

(11) **(Effective October 1, 2009)** Recyclable rigid plastic containers that are required to be labeled as provided in subsection (e)* of this section, that have a neck smaller than the body of the container, and that accept a screw top, snap cap, or other closure. The prohibition on disposal of recyclable rigid plastic containers in landfills does not apply to rigid plastic containers that are intended for use in the sale or distribution of motor oil.

(12) **(Effective October 1, 2009)** Wooden pallets, except that wooden pallets may be disposed of in a landfill that is permitted to only accept construction and demolition debris.

**Subsection (e) lists the Plastic Identification Codes 1 through 7.*