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## News

### Plastic bottle ban takes effect on Oct. 1

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NW GUILFORD COUNTY – The increase in the use of plastics in recent years has resulted in more of the material being tossed into garbage cans. So much so that if all the plastic drink bottles sent to landfills annually in North Carolina were lined up end-to-end, they would extend more than 301,366 miles. In fact, according to the N.C. Department of Environment and Natural Resources, North Carolinians throw away about 25,000 pounds of plastic bottles – the same weight as a school bus – every 1.7 hours.

But N.C. lawmakers intend to reduce those numbers with a new law that makes it illegal to put plastic bottles as well as used oil filters and wooden pallets into landfills.

The law takes effect Oct. 1 and primarily applies to soda and water bottles (Type 1 PETE) as well as milk jugs and detergent and shampoo bottles (Type 2 HDPE). A similar ban was instituted in 1994 on aluminum cans.

While recycling is certainly the environmentally sensitive thing to do, the ban doesn't mean the recycling police will be checking your garbage can, says Roger Marcum, general manager of Waste Industries, the company that handles garbage and recycling for residents of Oak Ridge. "If we pick up your trash and find a plastic bottle, shame on you, but you're not going to get fined," Marcum says.

"We want to be clear that the state will not be enforcing this law at the household or generator level – no one from the state will be looking in people's trash cans," says Scott Mouw of the state Division of Pollution Prevention and Environmental Assistance. But the state is urging municipalities to "use the ban as a way to communicate the importance of recycling to their citizens."

The ultimate responsibility to keep the bottles out of landfills falls on the companies that provide garbage services. The state will be "primarily looking at if a significant portion (of a load) is plastic bottles," something Marcum says wouldn't typically happen with residential garbage. "It might be a problem with an industrial customer or somebody who fills up a dumpster with plastic bottles."



After Oct. 1 it will be illegal to throw away plastic bottles.

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But the success of the ban still depends on cooperation from customers. Drew Isenhour, area president of Republic Services of N.C., which provides garbage and recycling service to Summerfield and Stokesdale residents, says the company has communicated the new law to its customers, landfill operators and sales people. "All of our municipal contracts address banned and unacceptable items, thus placing the ultimate burden back on the residents to ensure these items are not placed in the trash," Isenhour says.

Neither Waste Industries nor Republic Services anticipates any change in the service their customers now receive. Larger recycling containers will not be provided (although Waste Industries' customers can obtain them) and recycling will not be picked up more frequently than it is now. Oak Ridge and Stokesdale customers have their recycling picked up weekly, while it is collected in Summerfield every two weeks.

Along with protecting the environment, lawmakers instituted the change because there are several recycling centers in the state that are operating at less than capacity. Envision Plastics, which has a facility in Reidsville, is the second largest recycler of high-density polyethylene (HDPE #2) bottles in the nation. The Clear Path facility, under construction in Fayetteville, will have the capacity to recycle 280 million pounds of polyethylene terephthalate (PETE #1) bottles each year.

"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," Mouw says.

But garbage companies say they won't be making any money because of the new law. "The recycling markets are bad right now. It costs us more to recycle than to throw things away," Marcum says.

#### The Details

Banned from landfills effective Oct. 1

Plastic bottles with a 1 or a 2 on the bottom other than motor oil and pesticide containers

Wooden pallets

Oil filters

Oyster shells

Banned from landfills effective Jan. 1, 2011

Computer equipment

Televisions

Currently banned from landfills

Aluminum cans

Antifreeze

Appliances

Beverage containers (aluminum, glass or plastic) generated by bars or restaurants with an ABC license

Lead acid batteries

Oil

Tires

Yard waste