

Sample web page content

Reducing Waste, One Bag at a Time: Colorado's New 10-Cent Fee on Plastic and Paper Checkout Bags

The State of Colorado's [Plastic Pollution Reduction Act](#) (House Bill 21-1162) was passed in 2021 to reduce and mitigate plastic pollution in Colorado. It is estimated that people living in the US use on average [365 plastic bags per year](#). These bags are not widely recyclable because they damage recycling equipment, and even when they are put into the trash, lightweight plastic bags are often carried into the environment by wind. Plastic bags are one of the most [common pollutants in Colorado rivers](#), and can be lethal to birds, fish, and cattle that mistake plastics for food.

Starting January 1, 2023, paper and plastic checkout bags distributed at large Colorado retailers will be charged a fee of \$0.10 per bag.

Which businesses are required to charge \$0.10 cents per plastic or paper checkout bag as of January 1, 2023?

- Grocery stores, supermarkets, convenience stores, liquor stores, pharmacies or drug stores, or other retailers with more than three locations in Colorado OR with one or more locations outside of Colorado are required to charge \$0.10 per checkout bag.

Many Colorado businesses will be exempt from charging the bag fee, including:

- "Small" stores (the law defines small stores as those with three or fewer locations operating solely in Colorado, and is not part of a franchise, corporation, or partnership that has physical locations outside of Colorado)
- Farmers markets and roadside stand vendors that qualify for the small business exemption (three or fewer locations operating solely in Colorado).
- Restaurants (restaurants are exempt from the bag fee, regardless of number of locations).

Where do the fees collected go?

Retailers may keep four cents of each 10-cent fee to cover costs of compliance (including providing reusable bags for free or for purchase, training employees, etc.). Municipalities will collect 60% of the fees to administer the program, or to provide education and outreach or support for recycling, compost, or waste diversion programs in their communities.



Do I have to pay the fee?

Consumers are able to skip the fee by bringing their own reusable bags, including previously used plastic or paper bags. Recipients of federal or state food assistance—such as EBT, SNAP, or WIC—do NOT have to pay the bag fee.

Tips for skipping the bag fee

- Keep reusable bags in your car or on your bike, and in your purse, bag, or backpack so that you have bags with you when you need them.
- You may also bring previously used plastic or paper bags to pack your items and will not be charged a fee.
- If you forget your bags in the car, most stores will allow you to pack items into your cart, and you can transfer items into your bags at your car.

Does the 10 cent fee apply to all bags?

No. The 10 cent fee is only applied at large retailers, and only on plastic and paper checkout bags. Other types of bags you receive within a store, such as produce bags; bags used for loose, bulk items; dry cleaning bags; and bags used for prescription medicine are exempt from the fee.

Find more answers to [Frequently Asked Questions](#) here.

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