

FEBRUARY, 2016

# Dear Palo Alto Retailer:

The City of Palo Alto recently adopted ordinance revisions to prohibit the retail sale or distribution of plastic foam ice chests, egg cartons, foodware and packaging materials.\*

Plastic foam (e.g., Styrofoam™ and similar products) used in some single-use plastic products breaks down into tiny pieces and is one of the most prevalent forms of litter found in streets, creeks and the Bay. Plastic foam does not decompose and has well documented environmental hazards.

## STARTING MARCH 1, 2016 RETAILERS MAY NOT SELL OR DISTRIBUTE:

Foam Ice Chests



Foam Foodware



Foam Packaging of Any Kind



Foam Egg Cartons



## PLASTIC FOAM POLLUTES



**1,300** pieces of foam litter were found during creek cleanups in two small locations during 2015 creek cleanups.



**114** tons of nonrecyclable plastic foam—equivalent to 556,000 cubic foot bags—were landfilled in 2014 from Palo Alto's waste stream.



**8%** of the microplastics pollution found in San Francisco Bay is plastic foam based on a 2015 San Francisco Estuary Institute study.



**80%** of ocean pollution comes from land-based sources world wide. Most of it is plastic and it enters the food chain.



**90** California cities and counties have adopted ordinances restricting plastic foam.



CITY OF  
**PALO ALTO**



\* Municode 5.30 Plastic Foam and Non-Recyclable Food Service Containers and Packaging Items

# Frequently Asked Questions:

## Q What is plastic foam?

A Plastic foam (e.g., Styrofoam™) can be made from polystyrene, polyurethane, polypropylene or other plastic resins.

## Q Which items are prohibited from sale or distribution?

- A
- a. Plastic foam ice chests
  - b. Foam foodware (e.g., cups, plates and bowls)
  - c. Packaging materials such as foam peanuts
  - d. Plastic foam egg cartons
  - e. The use of plastic foam for complimentary beverages or food items at any business.

## Q When does the ordinance go into effect?

A March 1, 2016. Compliance checks will begin in spring 2016.

## Q Who does the ordinance apply to?

A Retailers in Palo Alto (includes Stanford Shopping Center). Retailers include all grocery stores, pharmacies, mailing services, hardware stores and any other retailer or business that may sell or distribute plastic foam products identified in the ordinance.

## Q What if I sell a product that was pre-packaged in foam?

A Unless otherwise specified in the ordinance, products containing plastic foam packaging that are shipped into Palo Alto for retail sale are excluded from the ordinance. However, a retailer in Palo Alto cannot add additional plastic foam packaging to protect the product during resale.

## Q My store reuses foam peanuts that my customers bring in. Is this allowed?

A No. Although reuse of packaging materials is usually preferred, foam packing materials can be released to the environment during transport.

## Q Why can't we just recycle plastic foam?

A Currently there are no reliable markets for plastic foam.

## Q What about restaurants and other food services?

A Restaurants have been prohibited from using plastic foam foodware since 2009.

## Q Are outreach materials available?

A Register placards and additional copies of this factsheet are available at [cityofpaloalto.org/plasticfoam](http://cityofpaloalto.org/plasticfoam). Call 650.329.2117 or email [cleanbay@cityofpaloalto.org](mailto:cleanbay@cityofpaloalto.org).

## Q What happens to stores that are not in compliance with the ordinance?

A Noncompliance is an infraction subject to a possible \$500 fine.

[www.cityofpaloalto.org/plasticfoam](http://www.cityofpaloalto.org/plasticfoam)



**Retailers must comply with ordinance requirements by March 1, 2016. Compliance checks will occur in spring 2016.**



To read the full ordinance visit [www.cityofpaloalto.org/plasticfoam](http://www.cityofpaloalto.org/plasticfoam). For more information call **650.329.2117** or email [cleanbay@cityofpaloalto.org](mailto:cleanbay@cityofpaloalto.org).

**Thank you for your help in protecting San Francisco Bay.**