

For Immediate Release

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Plastic Bags and Food Waste Banned Beginning July 1st

VRGA reminds retailers, grocers, customers that bans have not been suspended or pushed back

Berlin, Vt. – The Vermont Retail and Grocers Association (VRGA) is seeking to inform retailers and grocers throughout the state that the July 1st date for the single use products (Act 69) and organic waste (Act 148) bans has not been changed. Both come into full effect on July 1st, 2020. Retailers and grocers statewide are expected to be in compliance with the acts on that date.

The Single Use Products Ban, commonly referred to as the plastic bag ban, mandates that stores no longer provide single use carryout plastic bags or expanded polystyrene (plastic bags purchased prior to May 15th, 2019 can continue to be used until July 1st, 2021). Stores and food establishments will be required to charge not less than 10 cents for a paper bag with a basis weight of more than 30 pounds or less and, generally, paper bags shorter than 10 inches. Stores with delis or food establishments cannot provide plastic stirrers, and will be banned from providing a plastic straw unless a customer requests one.

Certain plastic and/or paper bags are exempt from being banned or charged for, including: Bags provided by a pharmacy, drycleaner, or flower shop to cover flowers; bags used to package loose items such as fruit, vegetables, nuts, coffee, grains, bakery items, candy, cards, small hardware items, or to wrap frozen foods, meat, or fish.

Certain expanded polystyrene food service products are exempt as well, including: Food or beverage that has been packaged outside the state (food being shipped from out-of-state manufacturers that use expanded polystyrene), and products used to package raw, uncooked, or butchered meat, fish, poultry, or seafood.

VRGA is aware that there is currently a shortage of paper bags available. The Vermont Legislature has made it clear that the intention of Act 69 is to shift consumers from plastic to reusable bags, not plastic to paper, and so they are not concerned with the inability of businesses to provide paper bags to consumers when plastic bags are outlawed. VRGA will continue to work with members to make sure they have access to the necessary supplies to support their communities and successfully do business.

The organic waste ban is a component of Act 148, which was passed in 2012. The July 1st ban represents the final implementation stage of the Universal Recycling law, implemented in parts over the last eight years. On July 1st, 2020, all organic material and food scraps of any kind, residential and commercial, will be banned from landfills. Haulers will be required to offer food scrap collection for nonresidential customers unless another hauler will provide that service. Organic material is defined as: Anything that was once alive and will decompose into soil. Food scraps generally are: trimmings and byproducts from prepping food and discarded or unwanted pre- and post-consumer food, including spoiled, stale, moldy, or partially-eaten food.

Business's statewide will be responsible for all solid waste materials produced during normal operations. To help customers and staff properly separate these materials, VRGA recommends using the standardized, statewide, Universal Recycling symbols (download at VTrecycles.com) to create signs and posters for your waste receptacles.

VRGA has prepared a webpage for members to access with various FAQ's, guidance documents, a list of haulers, webinars with the DEC, and other resources relating to Act 69 and Act 148. It is available at <https://vtrga.org/single-use-products-act-69-and-organic-waste-act-148-ban-resources>. VRGA will be

working with DEC to ensure retailers and grocers statewide are up to date with the requirements facing them as these acts are implemented.

To learn more about the work VRGA does, visit their website at www.vtrga.org, follow them on [facebook](#) & [twitter](#), call their office at (802) 839-1928 or visit them at 963 Paine Turnpike N, Berlin, VT 05602.

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About Vermont Retail & Grocers Association:

The Vermont Retail & Grocers Association represents approximately 800 Vermont retail stores and 250 suppliers to the industry, including members of the Vermont Specialty Food Association. VRGA is an association of merchants and trade partners united to promote the sustainable growth of the industry through the educational, economic and public policy needs of its members. The association is the leading voice in the legislature representing members when it comes to proposed changes in laws surrounding employment regulations, taxation, environmental regulations, and much more.