

Solid Waste Program 2021 legislation

Focus sheet

Solid Waste Program implementing laws addressing plastics, recycling, and litter.

Governor Inslee and the Washington State Legislature in 2021 made their waste and recycling priorities clear when they sent 4 new laws to Ecology's Solid Waste Management Program to be implemented in stages over the next several years.

Two new laws address everyday, single-use plastic items, one delays the implementation of the solar panel takeback program, and another authorizes reimbursement to local governments for litter clean-up work on the highway on- and off-ramps.

SB 5022 – Washington's new plastic law

The use of plastic and the impact of plastic pollution is a threat to human health, wildlife, and the environment. The new plastics law is aimed at reducing some single-use plastics, increasing recycled content in bottles and trash bags, and driving development of new markets for Washington's recyclable plastic.

The law includes several plastic policies:

- Requires a minimum amount of recycled content in several types of single-use plastics, starting with trash bags and beverage bottles.
- Requires food service businesses to only give customers single-use serviceware on request.
- Prohibits the sale of specific types of expanded polystyrene (e.g., Styrofoam™) products.
- Require state agencies to buy plastic trash bags that meet recycled content requirements.
- Creates a stakeholder committee to provides recycled content guidance to the legislature.
- Plastic bottles and containers are no longer required to include the "chasing arrows" symbol.

SB 5040 - Welcome to Washington Act

The Welcome to Washington Act authorizes all local governments to apply for reimbursement for their litter cleanup activities on state highway ramps within their jurisdiction. We incorporated new funding for this program into the Community Litter Cleanup Program under a special, 4 week application period that ended June 11, 2021.

Solar panel takeback program

Implementation of the solar panel takeback program was delayed with the passage of House Bill 1393. It delayed the start of the implementation of the Photovoltaic Module Stewardship and Takeback Program to July 1, 2024. That's when solar panel manufacturers are required to submit a stewardship plan. We will continue collaborating on this law's implementation with stakeholders.

Single-Use plastic bag ban

Substitute House Bill 1145 made a change to Washington's bag ban, which passed in 2019, allowing non-wood renewable fiber to be used in the production of compliant bags. With the change, compliant paper carryout bags may now contain 40% non-wood renewable fiber or a combination of postconsumer recycled materials and non-wood renewable fiber that totals at least 40%. The original law only allowed compliant paper bags to contain a minimum of 40% postconsumer recycled materials.



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