

10 cents  
each



## NEW FEE ON PAPER & PLASTIC BAGS

### FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

#### Why is there a fee on plastic and paper checkout bags?

Colorado's Plastic Pollution Reduction Act (HB21-1162) that was passed in 2021 addresses plastic and paper bags and polystyrene (also known as Styrofoam) food containers. The State's bill has different timelines for when changes take effect and what types of stores will be impacted. The first change will take effect on January 1, 2023, when large retailers in Colorado will be expected to charge \$0.10 per paper or plastic checkout bag. Consumers are able to skip the fee by bringing their own reusable bags.

#### Where will funds from the bag fee go?

Consumers are able to skip the fee by bringing their own reusable bags, which may include previously used plastic or paper checkout bags brought from home.

For consumers who choose to use new plastic or paper checkout bags, the accumulation of 10-cent bag fees are divided between the retailer, who retains 40% of the collected fees, and the municipality in which the retailer is located, which retains 60% of the collected fees to implement and enforce the law as well as use it for recycling, composting, and waste diversion programs and education.

#### What will people do who can't afford to pay the checkout bag fee?

Customers who receive federal or state food assistance do not have to pay the 10-cent fee for paper or plastic bags.

#### Why do the new rules only apply to large retailers?

Large retailers distribute a lot of plastic and paper bags, meaning that the new rules can cover a lot of ground through this one intervention. In addition, many large retailers have already started charging fees for checkout bags in other states, and have the experience and systems in place to charge and collect bag fees in Colorado.

#### What will I do to replace the plastic bags I use for other purposes (e.g., cat litter, dog poop, small trash cans, etc.)?

While the reuse of plastic and paper checkout bags has been a great way to extend the life of what otherwise would be a single-use bag, the switch to reusable or recyclable bags in our daily lives is essential. Examples of ways to switch from using plastic or paper checkout bags for other purposes, such as lining trash cans and litter boxes, include using unavoidable bags from other items you commonly purchase (for example, pet food bags, newspaper bags, bread bags, bulk toilet paper or water bottle plastic wrapping, bags used to package mulch, etc.). You can also purchase bags made from renewable resources or recycled content.

#### What will self-checkout look like at grocery stores?

At self-checkout, you will be asked to input how many new paper or plastic checkout bags you used for your order, and the fee will show on your receipt. If you receive income assistance at the local, state, or federal level, you do not have to pay the bag fee if you present proof of your assistance at checkout.

## Frequently asked questions, continued...

### What if a bag rips—do I have to pay for two?

No, accidents happen—you do not have to pay for the torn bag.



### Where can I get reusable bags?

Reusable bags are available at grocery stores, other retail stores, thrift stores, Facebook Marketplace, etc.

### How should I care for my reusable bags?

Reusable bags require regular cleaning just like any other item that comes into contact with food. Like a dirty fork or dish towel, wash your reusable bags.

### How will the paper and plastic checkout bag fee impact curbside pick-up and delivery services at grocery stores?

When placing pick-up and delivery orders, you will be charged the 10-cent fee per paper bag. While **this fee will apply to single-use bags provided through curbside shopping pick-up**, stores nationwide are exploring ways to eliminate these bags. Stores can put customers' goods in repurposed cardboard boxes that consumers can recycle (e.g., the Costco or Natural Grocers models), or they could store items in a cart or box and allow customers to self-bag at the curb. Some major brands are piloting reusable takeback programs for shopping bags.

If you receive income assistance at the local, state, or federal level, you do not have to pay the bag fee if you present proof of your assistance at checkout.

### What if I forgot my reusable bags, but I am already in the checkout line?

To make sure you always have your reusable bags handy, keep a few in a purse or backpack—or store them in your mode of transportation (car, bike, etc.). If you left your reusable bags in the car, most stores would let you pack your purchases back into the cart without bags, and you can transfer them to your car or bike trailer.

### Which disposable bags are not included in the paper and plastic checkout bag fee?

Paper and plastic checkout bags used by **customers who participate in state or federal food assistance programs are exempt**.

**Bags used for other purposes besides checkout are exempt, including:**

- Produce bags, and bags used for food that could contaminate other items, such as frozen food, meat, seafood, etc.
- Bags for unwrapped food and bakery goods
- Bags for loose, bulk items (hardware, nuts, fruits, vegetables, grains)
- Bags for dry cleaning or laundry
- Bags used for prescription medication
- Bags for the sale of small pets like fish, crustaceans, mollusks, and insects

Adapted from the City of Fort Collins: [fcgov.com/recycling/plastics](https://fcgov.com/recycling/plastics).