Montgomery County, Maryland
DISPOSABLE BAG LAW

www.montgomerycountymd.gov/BAG
or Call 311
SLOGAN AND WEBSITE

www.montgomerycountymd.gov/BAG
POSTER

Starting January 1, 2012
Retailers in Montgomery County who provide plastic or paper bags to customers are required to charge 5 cents a bag. Keep the change. Do yourself and the environment a favor – bring your reusable bag.

montgomerycountymd.gov/bag
or call 311
OVERVIEW

- Effective January 1, 2012
- 5-cent charge on most carryout plastic and paper bags from County retailers (includes all municipalities)
- Must charge 5-cents for each bag. Retailer retains 1-cent
GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

Decrease the use of disposable bags in Montgomery County

• Increase consumer, retailer and retail employee awareness of new law
• Enable and motivate consumers to embrace the new law
• Ensure that retailers are prepared to implement bag law
• Prepare retail workers to effectively implement bag law
• Enlist cooperation and support of business and community organizations to educate and motivate all affected parties
• Educate consumers on environmental advantages of reusable bags
WHY WE NEED A BAG LAW

- Montgomery County’s new Carryout Bag Law is designed to improve our environment by reducing the number of bags that become litter.
- Plastic bags are a significant source of litter.
- They pollute our streets, streams, and playgrounds, and harm property values.
- In fact, the biggest single source of litter in our streams is plastic bags.
- Currently, the County spends $3 million a year on litter clean up efforts.
WILL THE BAG LAW WORK?

- A similar program has been in effect in Washington, DC for the past 18 months

- DC’s program has already reduced plastic bag litter that clogs rivers and streams in Washington DC by an estimated 65 percent
HOW WILL THE FUNDS FROM THE BAG CHARGE BE USED?

- Montgomery County hopes we don’t collect any money from the Bag Charge
- Residents can avoid the charge for carryout bags by bringing their own bag when they shop
- Proceeds from the Carryout Bag Law will go exclusively to programs that fight litter and provide stormwater pollution control
WHAT STORES ARE REQUIRED TO CHARGE FOR BAGS?

Stores that provide bags to their customers to carry purchases out of the store:

- Grocery stores
- Service stations
- Food vendors
- Convenience stores
- Liquor stores
- Hardware
- Department stores
- Drug stores
- Other sellers
- Permanent booths
WHAT OTHER PURCHASES DOES THE LAW COVER?

- The 5-cent charge applies to purchases made over the phone/Internet/fax when delivered in a carryout bag provided by the store.
- The 5-cent charge applies to bags provided by the store at a self-checkout counter.
SOME BAGS ARE EXEMPT FROM THE BAG LAW

- Packaged bulk or perishable items
- Bags used to hold prescription drugs
- Paper bags from restaurants and delis for carry out, prepared or left-over food or drink
- Plastic bags in grocery stores used for produce
- Bags sold for initial use as yard waste bags, pet waste bags, garbage bags, dry cleaning bags or newspaper bags
- Bags provided by a seasonal stand or street fair stall, such as a farmer’s market, yard sale or “occasional retailer” (defined in the law as “…a retail establishment that engages in the retail sale of goods no more than six days in any calendar year)
WHAT DO RETAILERS NEED TO KNOW?

- A secure website will be set up for submission of the charge.
- A retail establishment must record on the customer’s transaction receipt the number of carryout bags that were provided to the customer and the total amount charge levied at a rate of 5 cents per bag.
- On or before the 25th day of each month, each retail establishment must remit the full amount of the charges collected for all carryout bags provided to a customer during the previous month, at a rate of 4 cents per bag.
- Retailers are required to pay only after their cumulative revenue from bags exceeds $100 (at least 2,500 bags paid for by customers).
- Information required for payment is the total number of bags paid for by customers and retailers’ identity facts.
WHAT DO RETAILERS NEED TO KNOW? (continued)

- Retailers are not required to provide cash credit for bags that customers voluntarily bring to the store.
- Retailers who provide a cash credit for bags can continue to do so purchases is not required in the Law.
- Under the law, retailers must charge customers for bags and may not provide a store credit to cover the bag tax amount.
WHAT ARE WE DOING TO EDUCATE RESIDENTS AND RETAILERS?

- Created website
- Created fact sheets and FAQ’s for residents and retailers
- Created “kitchen cabinet” of large and small retailers to advise on most effective ways to reach out to businesses
- Informally canvassed consumers and front-line retail employees
REACHING OUT TO RESIDENTS AND RETAILERS

- Major retailers
- Retail property owners and management firms
- Corporations with affinity for environmental issues
- Utilities
- Business associations and Chambers of Commerce
- Media outlets
- Environmental groups
- Education community (K-12 and higher ed)
- Umbrella community groups
- Multi-cultural outreach groups
- Low income outreach groups
- Senior organizations
REACHING OUT TO RESIDENTS AND RETAILERS (continued)

- Messaging and materials will vary based on target audience demographic
- Multi-lingual materials
- Dynamic website
- Social media (Facebook, Twitter, YouTube)
- Media materials
- County email taglines
- Materials for retailers
- Materials for consumers and residents
- Consumer advertising on buses
REACHING OUT TO RESIDENTS AND RETAILERS (continued)

Public Events

- Campaign Kick-off in November
- Bag Distribution Days
- Green Friday
REACHING OUT TO RESIDENTS AND RETAILERS (continued)

- MCPS involvement
- Canvass at high traffic retail areas and community events
- Coordinate with community and business partners
- Publicize at malls and shopping centers
- Information on 311
Phase 5: Distribution of Bags to Lower Income Households and Seniors

- Seek counsel and coordinate with community partners for grassroots outreach
- Free bag distribution days throughout campaign
- First order of 30,000 bags now available
- DEP coordinates with Manna, other non-profit groups and multiple county agencies to distribute bags to targeted population
- Elected officials to participate in distribution
REACHING OUT TO RESIDENTS AND RETAILERS
(continued)

- Kitchen cabinet
- Direct mail (12,000 County retailers contacted)
- Two Webinars monthly to brief retailers (led by DEP and Finance)
- Messaging for association partners to send to membership
- Briefings for broad-reaching business groups
- Work with retail property owners, management companies to reach tenants
- Workshops for retailers
REACHING OUT TO RESIDENTS AND RETAILERS (continued)

- Seek counsel of kitchen cabinet for most effective approach
- “Train the trainer”
- Countdown flyers in break rooms
- Provide check-out materials
- Coordinate with organized labor
JANUARY OUTREACH

- Continue portions of education and outreach throughout January, including bus ads
- Consumers will have increased focus and interest after January 1
GROUPS AND VOLUNTEERS CAN HELP GET THE WORD OUT ABOUT THE BAG LAW

- Handing out flyers at events
- Working with the County to reach out to lower income and senior residents
- Grassroots outreach to our culturally diverse communities
- Participating in “reusable bag distribution” days
- Putting posters and flyers at work or other locations
- Including messages to clients and community members through newsletters, circulars or listservs
- Educating County residents on disposable bag alternatives
- Hosting workshops to educate residents
QUESTIONS?