



Plastic Bag Tax FAQs for Citizens:

When does this law take effect?

January 1st, 2022

How much is the tax?

5-cents per disposable plastic bag

At which stores does the tax apply?

Any grocery store, convenience store, or drugstore located in the City of Roanoke. Larger retailers that contain a grocery store, convenience store, or drugstore are also subject to the tax. The store must maintain regular business hours at a fixed place of business in the City. This includes in-store purchases, to-go purchases, delivery purchases, and curbside pick-up purchases from its establishments within City limits.

What types of bags are excluded from the tax?

- Paper bags
- Plastic bags that are solely used to wrap, contain, or package ice cream, meat, fish, poultry, produce, unwrapped bulk food items, or perishable food items in order to avoid damage or contamination
- Plastic bags used to carry dry cleaning or prescription drugs
- Multiple plastic bags sold in packages and intended for use as garbage, pet waste, or leaf removal bags

Will I be required to pay the tax if I bring my own bags to shop?

No, you will not need to pay the tax if you bring your own reusable bags.

What does the disposable bag tax money fund?

- Environmental cleanup
- Providing education programs designed to reduce environmental waste
- Mitigating pollution and litter
- Providing reusable bags to recipients of Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) or Women, Infants, and Children Program (WIC) benefits

Will the City provide reusable bags to those who cannot afford them?

Yes, the City will provide reusable bags to recipients of SNAP and WIC beneficiaries.

Can the plastic bag tax be paid for with EBT cards for SNAP or WIC recipients?

No, the state's grocery bag fees may not be paid for with SNAP or WIC benefits. In addition, the Food and Nutrition Service does not have authority to exempt SNAP or WIC clients from this fee. Therefore, grocery bag fees must be paid for using cash, credit card, or non-SNAP or WIC debit.

Are plastic bags more hygienic than reusable bags?

There is no conclusive evidence that plastic bags are more hygienic than reusable bags. While some studies have shown bacterial growth on unwashed reusable bags, this bacteria is not usually harmful to humans (like most of the bacteria on surfaces around your home). While the risk of food-borne illnesses from reusable bags is extremely small, regularly washing your bags is recommended, especially to protect against COVID-19.

What about recycling plastic bags?

Only about 1% of plastic bags are properly recycled today. Many communities don't accept plastic bags in curbside recycling because they jam and damage the sorting machinery. As a result, most plastic bags end up in landfills, incinerated, or polluting the environment.

Why is this tax important?

Pollution from single-use plastics is extremely harmful to our land and waterways and poses a threat to the health of humans and animals alike. Plastic bags have a useful life that is often no more than minutes, yet this plastic can last in the environment for hundreds of years or more. Plastics contain harmful chemicals and never truly decompose—instead they break down into smaller pieces called microplastics which are consumed by humans and animals through our food and water sources. This tax will help address these problems by drastically reducing the plastic pollution in our streets, streams, and stormwater system.

Where can I find the guidelines and additional information?

The full guidelines and additional information are available on the City's website: roanokeva.gov/2706/Plastic-Bag-Tax. To contact the Department of Taxation, please visit the Department's website at tax.virginia.gov or contact the Department at (804) 367-8037.