



How to prepare for the plastic bag ban

In a little under a month – 1 July – lightweight plastic shopping bags will be banned in all retail stores; cafés and even your local fish and chip shop. It's a good time for businesses to start talking to their staff about preparing for the day the phaseout comes into force.

The phaseout includes all bags (new and used) with handles (including die-cut handles) made of plastic that is less than 70 microns in thickness. This includes plastics made from bio-based materials such as starch and plastics designed to be compostable or degradable.

While consumers have become used to not getting plastic bags at the supermarket, it may come as a shock to them when they don't get one to carry away their new sweatshirt or shoes, or takeaway lunch.

An easy way to help customers prepare for the phaseout is to begin training staff to ask customers if they need a bag or not, instead of automatically offering one, or only provide a bag if asked. If businesses plan to go bag-free after the ban, they should put up a poster to let customers know in advance.

If switching to another type of bag that meets the phaseout requirements, it is still preferable to only give out bags when needed.

If the week before the ban you still have a lot of plastic carrier bags in stock, here are a couple of ideas for getting rid of them without resorting to landfill:

- Use them as bin liners in your business;
- Let customers know you have bags to give away so they can use them at home as bin liners

It's better to have them reused as many times as possible rather than just sending them straight to landfill.

The Ministry for the Environment has produced a toolkit for businesses, which you can view [here](#).

The toolkit includes:

- [Facts for businesses](#) (the who, the what, the how)
- [Answering customers' questions](#)
- [Alternatives to single-use plastic bags](#)

The toolkit has been translated into [te reo Maori](#) and will be translated into Hindi and Mandarin.

- A poster reminding customers that the ban is coming and that they will need to bring reusable bags will also be made by the Ministry but only in English. WasteMINZ is making posters for store owners in different languages such as Mandarin and Hindi. If you would like to be emailed a copy of those posters once they are available please email justine@wasteminz.org.nz