



Environment

Prince George's County, Maryland

New Environmental Laws Take Effect in Prince George's County

For Immediate Release: 7/1/2015 12:00 AM

Contact: Linda Lowe, Public Information Officer, Department of the Environment/301-883-5952

Bans on coal tar pavement products; disposal of plastic bags/film in single-stream recycling start July 1, 2015

Largo, MD – Starting today, it is illegal to sell, use or permit the use of coal tar pavement products on property in Prince George's County. Coal tar pavement products are commonly used to seal asphalt driveways and parking lots and contain high levels of polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons (PAHs) that are known to cause cancer in humans and are toxic to fish and other aquatic life. Contractors or property owners that use a coal tar product are subject to a fine of up to \$1,000 per day for each violation.

The County says the ban will minimize the unnecessary stormwater runoff of harmful contaminants to local waterways. Studies conducted by the U.S. Geological Survey found that PAHs are significantly elevated in stormwater flowing from parking lots and other areas where coal tar products were used as compared to stormwater flowing from areas not treated with the sealant.

“Runoff from rain can pick up dangerous chemicals, including those found in coal tar, and spread those contaminants into area water sources,” says Prince George's County Department of the Environment Director Adam Ortiz. “Safer alternatives to coal tar have been developed and have led to improvements in water quality. This ban will assist in our efforts in cleaning our local waterways.”

Residents should request their contractor to use coal tar free products that are less toxic such as asphalt-based or latex sealants and to review ingredients and Materials Safety Data Sheets (MSDS) when purchasing products from local home improvement stores or other retailers for do-it-yourself projects. The County will work with partners to implement the ban and provide additional outreach to property owners, contractors, distributors and retail vendors. To see a list of coal tar free alternative products and to learn more about the coal tar pavement ban, [click here](#) or visit environment.mypgc.us.

Another law in effect is the ban of plastic bags of any color, size or shape and plastic film in the County's Residential Curbside Single-Stream Recycling Program. The plastic bags and plastic film currently placed into the single-stream recycling program are not being recycled because there is no end market for the material after it is mixed with other recyclables and becomes dirty and contaminated. They also pose a problem with the sorting process and clog the machinery often causing staff downtime and costly maintenance.

The County encourages residents to return the plastic bags and plastic film to local grocery stores and other retailers that have plastic bag recycling collection programs and have placed collection boxes in their stores usually located at or near a store's main entrance. Most clean and dry plastic bags are recyclable at local drop-off locations. To find one near you, [click here](#).

"The best thing our residents can do is to take their own reusable bag when shopping," says Ortiz. "Most are made with eco-friendly materials, can be used multiple times and are less harmful than plastic to the environment."

For more information about the plastic bag/film ban, [click here](#) for frequently asked questions.

To submit a service request for more information on recycling programs, please contact CountyClick at 3-1-1 or submit a request for assistance online at www.countyclick311.com.

###