Rushern L. Baker, III
County Executive

FAQ

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Prince George's County
DEPARTMENT OF THE ENVIRONMENT
Adam Ortiz | Director

Why is the County banning the sale and use of polystyrene (commonly known as "Styrofoam") food service products in Prince George's County?

To reduce the amount of foam waste entering the landfill and littering our roadways, neighborhoods and local waterways, the County is requiring the use of non-foam food packaging products that are environmentally-friendly and for everyone to be "Foam Free in PGC."

Polystyrene (commonly known as Styrofoam™ or foam) is found in large quantities along the Anacostia watershed. It lightweight and is easily blown by wind and carried by rain from streets and sidewalks into storm drains where it goes directly into rivers and streams. In the water, foam breaks into small pieces that pollute the County's waterbodies, adhering to harmful toxics that bioaccumulate in the food chain when wildlife mistakes the foam for food. Not only is foam litter unsightly, it has harmful effects on the health of the County's local bodies of water, wildlife and citizens.

In addition, foam is not commonly recycled.

When did the "Foam Free in PGC" effort begin?

July 1, 2016.

Which businesses are affected? *(including, but not limited to the following)*

- Fast food restaurants
- Cafés and delicatessens
- Cafeterias
- Coffee shops
- Convenience stores
- Discount stores
- Dollar Stores
- Supermarkets and grocery stores
- Food carts or trucks
- Pack and ship stores
- Retailers and wholesalers selling disposable dishware, storage containers, packing materials and polystyrene products

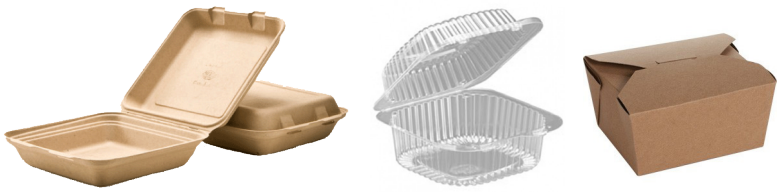
Is Prince George's County the only jurisdiction to ban foam products?

No. Washington, D.C., Montgomery County and the City of Takoma Park in Maryland have also passed "foam free" laws aimed at reducing foam litter.

What are some examples of single use foam food service products?

- Cups
- Plates
- Bowls
- Carry out containers
- Trays
- Packing peanuts

What are acceptable alternatives products and where are they available for purchase?



There are environmentally friendly alternatives available, such as reusable trays, plates, bowls, cups, paper products, and others made from recycled content which are also recyclable or compostable. Non-foam food service products are readily available from various vendors at comparable prices. A list of vendors that offer alternative or compliant products is available at **environment.mypgc.us/foamfree**.

FOAM FREE IN PGC

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Which foam products are exempt?

- Foam packaging for food and beverages filled and sealed outside of Prince George's County

- Foam packaging for raw, uncooked or butchered meat, fish, poultry or seafood consumed off-premises

How can I tell if a product is made from foam?

Do not purchase any of these items that have the following words in the product description:

- Expanded polystyrene
- Polystyrene
- Foam
- #6 EPS

What should I do with my inventory or excess stock of foam packaging?

Please contact County Click at 3-1-1 for more information.

How will this law be enforced?

Warnings will be issued for the first violation. A $250 fine will be issued for the second violation and a $1,000 fine for the third violation within a 12 month period. Each day a violation exists is a separate offense.

How are businesses being notified?

Postcards with detailed information about being "Foam Free in PGC" have been mailed to businesses throughout the County. Information materials are also available online at environment.mypgc.us/foamfree.

How can I report a business or organization that continues to use foam products?

Please report tips to County Click by visiting countyclick.princegeorgescountymd.gov or dialing 3-1-1. All tips can be anonymous. A DoE inspector will follow up with the report by conducting an inspection of the establishment.

Whom can I contact with more questions?

For more information, contact Aaron Herbert at (301) 883-6210.