



## THE BOROUGH OF JENKINTOWN

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On March 25, 2026, the Jenkintown Borough Council approved a law regulating single use plastic bags and plastic straws and stirrers by retail establishments within the Borough. This tool kit document is a summary of the law and a collection of questions and issues to explain the details of the law.

### **Why Was This Ordinance Passed?**

An important goal of the Borough and the Jenkintown 2035 Comprehensive Plan is promoting sustainability through the procurement and use of sustainable products and services to preserve the natural, scenic, historic, and aesthetic values of the Borough.

The consumption of single-use plastics is pervasive and increasing. The entire life cycle of single-use plastic products is rife with health effects. Plastic production and disposal emit around 3% of global greenhouse gas emissions. Additionally, plastics can take anywhere from 20 to 500 years to decompose. Before they have decomposed, plastics can block waterways and cause bodily harm to marine animals. Even after decomposing, they never fully disappear; they just get smaller and smaller breaking up into microplastics and nanoplastics. These particles then contaminate water, food, and soil. The New England Journal of Medicine recently published a study linking microplastics and nanoplastics found in plaques of human blood vessels to a potential increased risk of heart attack, stroke, or death (Marfella *et al.*, 2024). Furthermore, nanoplastics have been found in various food sources such as fish, poultry, cows, pigs, bottled water, and milk.

### **Ordinance Summary**

Retail establishments in Jenkintown are now prohibited from providing single-use plastic bags, non-recycled paper bags, or bags that don't qualify as reusable, beginning **July 23, 2026**. Customers should bring their own bag or retail establishments may provide a recycled paper bag or a reusable bag for a minimum fee of \$0.10. Additionally, retail establishments will only provide compostable straws and stirrers unless a single-use plastic straw is requested by the customer, beginning **July 23, 2026**.



Businesses must display signage informing customers of these changes as of **April 22, 2026 at least until September 23, 2026** (within 30 days of the date of passage and for 6 months after). This signage explains what types of bags and purchases are impacted. An example is provided with this tool kit.

Any non-compliance of the law will be first addressed through a written notice of violation. This is in line with enforcement of similar laws in the area surrounding Jenkintown.

### **What's Covered Under Jenkintown's New Law?**

Single use plastic bags and straws and drink stirrers.

### **Summary Of Exemptions**

- Persons using Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), Pennsylvania Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC), or Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) benefits are exempt from the fee.
- The fee may be waived for online orders.
- Retail Establishments may be exempt for up to a year if they write the The Borough Manager and demonstrate that the requirements would cause undue hardship.
- Non-profits are exempt from the law as long as they provide donated or re-purposed plastic bags.
- Certain bags which are are considered as exempted bags and not subject to regulation as single-use plastic bags include:
  - A bag used inside a Retail Establishment by a Customer to deliver perishable items to the point-of-sale at that establishment;
  - A bag used to package bulk items such as nuts, grains, candy;
  - A bag used to contain or wrap meats or fish; to contain unwrapped prepared foods or bakery goods;
  - A bag used solely to contain live animals, such as fish or insects sold at a pet store;
  - A newspaper bag;
  - Bags sold in packages containing multiple bags intended for use as food storage bags, garbage bags, or pet waste bags; a laundry or dry-cleaning bag; or
  - A bag utilized in connection with the delivery of goods by mail or transportation delivery service providers.



### **What Will Happen When I Get to The Checkout Register?**

Customers may use their own bags or purchase a bag for a minimum fee of \$0.10.

### **I Like to Use A Straw With My Drink. What Should I Do?**

Retail establishments will provide compostable straws and stirrers unless a single-use plastic straw is requested by the customer.

### **What Is the Definition Of A Recycled Paper Bag?**

A paper bag that meets the following, but not including an exempted bag:

- Contains no old growth fiber; and
- Contains a minimum of 40% post-consumer recycled content; and
- Is labeled in a highly visible manner with the name of the manufacturer and the percentage of post-consumer recycled content of the bag in an easy-to-read font size.

### **What Is Considered A Retail Establishment?**

A location where food or other products are offered to the public for direct sale or delivery to a customer, including but not limited to the following: supermarket, convenience store, service station, delicatessen, department store, dollar store, clothing store, restaurant, pharmacy, food truck, farmers market, or delivery service.

### **What If I Just Purchased A Larger Order Of Single-Use Plastic Bags?**

Retail Establishments may be exempt for up to a year if they write the The Borough Manager and demonstrate that the requirements would cause undue hardship.

### **What Straws Can I Offer My Customers?**

You may offer your customers a reusable straw or compostable straws unless a single-use plastic straw is requested by the Customer.



### **What Happens If A Business Fails To Comply?**

The Borough Manager or their designee has the responsibility for enforcement of this law. Any Retail Establishment that violates or fails to comply with any of the requirements of this law, after an initial written warning notice has been issued for that violation, shall be liable for the violation. If a Retail Establishment who fails to comply with the initial written warning notice within the time period provided or has subsequent violations of this law after the issuance of an initial written warning notice, the Borough may seek the following civil penalties through a civil enforcement action against the Operator of the Retail Establishment:

- a. a civil penalty of \$50.00 for a first offense; and
- b. a civil penalty of \$100.00 for a second offense; and
- c. a civil penalty of \$200.00 for a third or any subsequent offense.

The Borough shall also be entitled to collect court costs and reasonable attorneys fees as part of the enforcement proceedings. Each day a violation continues shall constitute a separate and distinct offense under this law. In addition, each violation of any of the provisions of this law shall be deemed to be a separate and distinct offense. In addition to the penalties set forth in this law, the Borough may seek legal, injunctive, or other equitable relief to enforce this law. The failure of the Borough to enforce any provision of this law shall not constitute a waiver by the Borough of its rights to future enforcement hereunder.

### **Who Can I Talk To If I Have Questions Or Concerns?**

Feel free to contact George Locke, Borough Manager, Zoning Officer at [glocke@jenkintownboro.com](mailto:glocke@jenkintownboro.com) or 215-885-0700 with any questions. Additionally, the law is provided in full at: [www.jenkintownboro.com](http://www.jenkintownboro.com)