



**SOLID WASTE DIVISION**  
**RECYCLING SECTION**  
**DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL MANAGEMENT**  
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December 2012

To All Hawai'i County Businesses,

Starting January 17, 2013, the County of Hawai'i's new Plastic Bag Reduction Ordinance 12-1 becomes effective. This new law affects all businesses in Hawai'i County. The purpose of the law is to reduce the use of plastic checkout bags and encourage the use of more environmentally preferable alternatives such as reusable bags or paper bags.

Under the law, a business is defined as *"any commercial enterprise or establishment, including sole proprietorships, joint ventures, partnerships and corporations, or any other legal entity, and includes independent contractors associated with the business. Exempted from these rules are organizations classified under Section 501 (c) of the United States Internal Revenue code or non-incorporated community booster organizations.*

During the first year of the new law, beginning January 17, 2013, businesses may offer plastic checkout bags for purchase but may not provide them to customers for free. Each business determines how much to charge for their plastic checkout bags and any such fees are the property of the business.

The second year, starting January 17, 2014, businesses may not provide plastic checkout bags to customers for free or for purchase. The law will allow plastic bags without handles that are designed and used solely for protection of food products such as raw meat, poultry, seafood, frozen foods, deli foods, fruits, vegetables, nuts, grains, cereal, flour, rice and candy. It also allows for plastic bags designed and used for small retail items like jewelry, buttons, beads, ribbon and hardware items such as nails, nuts and screws. Plastic bags used to protect laundry and dry cleaning are permitted as well. Biodegradable or compostable plastic checkout bags are not permissible under the law.

Public hearings to adopt administrative rules for implementing the law were held in Kailua-Kona and Hilo and final adoption of the rules is planned for late December or early January. For updates and for a copy of the draft rules, please visit our website <http://www.hawaii zerowaste.org/reuse/plastic-bag-reduction-ordinance>.

To assist businesses with communications to their customers about the new law, the County has developed public outreach and education initiatives. Some of the outreach tools include templates for banners, posters and leaflets that can be downloaded from our website and may be distributed to your customers and/or store personnel. The County has also produced a limited supply of banners, posters, buttons and leaflets that can be picked up from both our offices in Hilo and/or Kona.

If you would like to arrange to pickup any materials or have any questions, please email [bring-ur-bag@co.hawaii.hi.us](mailto:bring-ur-bag@co.hawaii.hi.us) or call the County Solid Waste and Recycling Office at 961-8270.