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Ban on plastic grocery bags takes effect July 1 in unincorporated L.A. County

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No more plastic

The ban on plastic bags will apply only in unincorporated areas of Los Angeles County, including some northern and western parts of the county not shown below.



KHANG NGUYEN Los Angeles Times

A sweeping ban on plastic grocery

bags will go into effect July 1 for unincorporated areas of Los Angeles County.

The [bag ban](#) was touted by county supervisors as an environmental measure to rid the county of "urban tumbleweed" that pollutes landfills and gets washed out to sea. Paper bags will still be available, but customers will be charged 10 cents per bag.

The effort is intended to encourage shoppers to bring reusable bags to the market for shopping.

The plastic bag ban will affect anyone who shops at stores outside the county's incorporated cities, such as the communities of Rowland Heights, Hacienda Heights, Altadena, La Crescenta, Topanga

Canyon, Marina del Rey, Baldwin Hills, Athens, Willowbrook, Florence, Rancho Dominguez, Valencia, East Pasadena and East Los Angeles. About 1.1 million people in the county live in the unincorporated areas.

Beginning July 1, 67 large supermarkets and pharmacies must stop providing disposable plastic bags. By January 2012, the ban will cover about 1,000 smaller stores.

Supervisors passed the ban last year on a 3-1 vote, supported by supervisors Gloria Molina, Mark Ridley-Thomas and Zev Yaroslavsky. Supervisor Michael D. Antonovich opposed the measure and Don Knabe was absent.

Antonovich expressed concern that small, mom-and-pop shops would be at a disadvantage financially, in part because they wouldn't have access to volume discounts for paper and reusable bags. He also worried that low-income people would be forced to buy bags to pick up pet waste or carry their lunch.

"At a time of economic uncertainty, with a large number of businesses leaving our state and community this would not be an appropriate time ... to impose this additional regulation," Antonovich has said.

Mark Gold, president of the Santa Monica environmental group Heal the Bay, has said that previous county efforts to promote recycling of plastic bags at grocery stores had been a failure.

"You cannot recycle your way out of the plastic bag problem," Gold said. "The cost of convenience can no longer be at the expense of the environment."

The county voted to ban plastic bags in November after the Legislature failed to pass a statewide bag ban last August.

The proliferation of plastic bags has wreaked environmental havoc. [A Pulitzer Prize-winning Los Angeles Times series in 2006](#) documented how plastics were choking the seas. In one region in the Pacific Ocean halfway between San Francisco and Hawaii, a garbage patch twice the size of Texas is swirling clockwise, filled with plastic debris that is ingested by birds and other wildlife.

On Wednesday, Molina will host a free reusable bag giveaway at 2 p.m. at the El Super grocery store at 3405 E. Cesar Chavez Ave. in East Los Angeles.