



Buffalo Rising

ENVIRONMENT

FIX IT

THE CITY

City of Buffalo is Considering a Ban on Styrofoam Food Service Containers



by BRo Guest Authors April 15, 2019, 11:08 am 44 Comments

LET'S RAISE OUR STYROFOAM CUPS:
MAY OLD-AGE KILL YOU
BEFORE THE BENZENE
GETS YOU





Author: John S Szalasny

As we celebrate Earth Day 2019, the City of Buffalo is considering legislation to ban Expanded Polystyrene (Plastic Foam) Food Packaging (commonly known by the trademark name Styrofoam®). Over 90 percent of plastics never get recycled and Expanded Polystyrene makes up large percentage of that amount.

With New York State's recent passage of the **Plastic Carryout Bag Prohibition**, another largely unrecycled stream of plastics will be removed from our waste stream. Like the plastic bag, Expanded Polystyrene Food Packaging is not recyclable through municipal recycling programs. Unlike the plastic bag, there is no drop off program (or a recycling center in New York State) for used Expanded Polystyrene Food Packaging. In review for their current ban, New York City's Department of Sanitation determined that "Expanded Polystyrene single serve articles were not recyclable in an "economically feasible" and "environmentally effective" way." Expanded Polystyrene is 98 percent air, so even though it contributes less than 1 percent by weight to waste collections, it contributes 30 percent by volume to landfills that are rapidly reaching its capacity limits.

Waste issues are big. But, if you think about litter, you usually have an image of Expanded Polystyrene in your head. However, the issue doesn't stop with the empty cup or clamshell food container. If you've ever held an Expanded Polystyrene container, you know how easy it is to crush. Even when properly disposed, foam containers easily break down into small pieces when compacted in a garbage truck, allowing small

pieces to blow away to settle on land and waterways. These small pieces look like food to animals causing animals to starve while their stomachs are filled with polystyrene or other plastics.

“ Councilman David Franczyk says the City of Buffalo nearly passed a Styrofoam ban in 1990. ”

Litter issues are huge. But, the health impacts may be even worse. When your hot beverage or to go lunch is served in an Expanded Polystyrene container, the heat causes the product to leach toxic chemicals such as benzene and styrene into your drink and food. The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services declared styrene a very possible human carcinogen (making Expanded Polystyrene the only food packaging item made from a suspected carcinogen); other studies have linked the two chemicals to Parkinson’s Disease as well as Leukemia. No matter how you spin it, you are ingesting a petroleum bi-product (now predominately made from natural gas from hydrofractured wells) every time you consume from these containers when heated.

Heath issues are immense. But, if we came back to Earth 500 years from now, we would still see intact Styrofoam cups and containers in our landfills. Polystyrene breaks down primarily through photodegration. Being buried in a landfill, foam containers never have access to sunlight. But if it did, Expanded Polystyrene does not break down into less harmful components – it breaks down into smaller and smaller bits. As these microplastics wash away from the landfill and enter the watershed, they will flow into our lakes and oceans affecting our drinking water and aquatic habitats.

Recently, Suffolk County joined New York City and Albany and Ulster counties in banning Single Use Plastic Foam Food Packaging from use within its jurisdiction. The New York State Legislature is also considering a similar ban for state operated facilities, so action by the City of Buffalo will have many communities to look to as a model for legislation. Restaurants, on a local as well as a national level, have been able to make the switch from foam to more ecologically friendly containers. The City of Buffalo should institute an Expanded Polystyrene Food Packaging ban for the economic reasons as well as health

issues that can be avoided with a ban on Styrofoam®.

This recent effort started through a campaign Bring NYC's Styrofoam Ban to My Hometown! which was recently started for the Sierra Club Niagara Group.

Use this Facebook Group as a reference for any recycling or plastics issue.

Lead image: By Buffalo cartoonist David Corbett. Cartoon presented by Hyatts – All Things Creative.

Tagged with: bags Buffalo NY City of Buffalo containers environment Expanded Polystyrene human carcinogen landfills Leukemia Microplastics Parkinson's Disease photodegradation Plastic Carryout Bag Prohibition plastics Styrofoam



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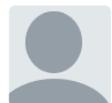
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[LOG IN WITH](#)[OR SIGN UP WITH DISQUS](#) **Louis Tully** • a day ago

We accept long-term detriment in favor of short-term ease and convenience. The way we shit on this planet is remarkably prolific.

7  |  • [Reply](#) • [Share](#) ›**Buffalover716** • a day ago

This is a no-brainer. Like removing lead from gas, and mercury from power-plant emissions, the only way to move environmental sustainability at scale is through government action. Super happy about plastic bag ban too! Good to see local politicians putting sustainability into law.

5  |  • [Reply](#) • [Share](#) ›**taxpayer22** • a day ago

95% of plastic in the oceans comes from Third World countries. And less than 1% of plastic ocean debris comes from America.

8  |  • [Reply](#) • [Share](#) ›**BlackRockLifer**  [taxpayer22](#) • 21 hours ago

We have been shipping our plastic waste TO the third world for decades, it's OUR waste in the oceans too.

4  |  • [Reply](#) • [Share](#) ›**taxpayer22**  [BlackRockLifer](#) • 20 hours ago

Wrong.

Two of the ten most polluted rivers on the planet are in Africa, the Niger and Nile rivers, two are in South Asia, the Indus and Ganges rivers, and the remaining six are in East and Southeast Asia... 95% of the plastic pollution in the World's oceans comes from just these 10 rivers.

5  |  • [Reply](#) • [Share](#) ›[Show more replies](#)**Louis Tully**  [taxpayer22](#) • 21 hours ago

All the more reason for this ban and to encourage similar initiatives. Since the rest of the world so often tends to follow America's lead (for whatever reason) we should lead the

charge and assume the sources of that 95% will follow.

Great idea!

4 ^ | v • Reply • Share ›

taxpayer22 → Louis Tully • 20 hours ago

China is the most polluting country on the planet, followed by Southeast Asia and Pacific countries such as Indonesia, the Philippines, Vietnam and more far below, Thailand and Malaysia.

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BlackRockLifer • a day ago

The large health care system I work for banned styrofoam years ago, contrary to the naysayers we adjusted fine and the price for sustainable packages has since dropped to be competitive with styrofoam.

1 ^ | v • Reply • Share ›

Louis Tully → BlackRockLifer • 21 hours ago

I lol'd when reading the article in the paper yesterday about this ban. The opponent (who works for the industry) argued that hospitals use styrofoam and so it must not be that bad otherwise hospitals wouldn't use it.

Hospitals are massive sources of waste and pollution, and likely most or all of the health care industry surely ranks near the top. But it's an unpopular finger to point. No one wants to tell the institution that they may need to save their life one day to change.

*<https://www.reuters.com/art...>

2 ^ | v • Reply • Share ›

BlackRockLifer → Louis Tully • 21 hours ago

I've been a member of our green committee for many years and we tackled styrofoam as one of our first efforts. Lots of pushback and whining but we adapted just fine. We also don't provide or sell plastic water bottles and we have removed many products from our system that were not environmentally friendly including construction and renovation materials of which I am directly involved.

1 ^ | v • Reply • Share ›

breckenridge • a day ago

This reminds me of when McDonald's did away with their styrofoam Big Mac boxes sometime around 1990.

The floppy white clamshell styrofoam boxes are my least favorite containers to get takeout in anyway, regardless of their environmental issues.

1 ^ | v • Reply • Share ›

Fried Bacon • 3 hours ago

Are we sure the alternatives are any better? Everyone convinced fast food from using Styrofoam cups and the wax lined cups are far worse than the planet.

<https://www.apartmenttherapy.com/are-foam-cups-actually-better-for-the-environment-than-paper-250436>

^ | v • Reply • Share ›

BlackRockLifer → **Fried Bacon** • an hour ago

Your link doesn't work but there are new alternatives to wax lined cups and other packaging being developed all the time, all are less detrimental to the environment than Polystyrene.

1 ^ | v • Reply • Share ›

Jerry Mandering • a day ago

Unintended Consequences? I worry about damage to the forest ecosystems worldwide as many replacement options for clamshell packages entail paper products. Or, aluminum containers in place of styrofoam--could it cause more plunder of world mineral resources?

^ | v • Reply • Share ›

BlackRockLifer → **Jerry Mandering** • a day ago

Styrofoam is petroleum product and is much more detrimental to our environment than renewable resources like paper. Polystyrene containers leach toxic styrene into the foods and beverages that are put into them and is not recyclable and takes 500 years to break down. Polystyrene manufacturing is one of the greatest generators of toxic waste and the use and disposal make polystyrene second in all products when it comes to energy consumption, greenhouse gases, and total environmental effect. Polystyrene is extremely hazardous when burned and pollutes our waterways and poisons fish that eat the small particles. It's really a no brained to ban this stuff.

1 ^ | v • Reply • Share ›

Johnny Pizza • a day ago

"The City of Buffalo should institute an Expanded Polystyrene Food Packaging ban for the

economic reasons”

Wait what were the economic reasons? It's pretty well known this will cost businesses money to implement, the economic argument is not in favor of your position.

^ | v • Reply • Share ›

lain • a day ago

This will hurt small businesses who run on a shoestring budget

<https://buffalonews.com/201...>

^ | v • Reply • Share ›

greenca → **lain** • a day ago

These businesses can raise prices by a nickel or a dime and serve their food in non-hazardous containers.

5 ^ | v • Reply • Share ›

lain → **greenca** • 21 hours ago

They could, but many won't for a myriad of reasons. They'll instead try to eat the extra fees, and make due. Bigger businesses can absorb these hits from unfunded mandates...mom and pops usually can't.

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