

Support AB 1358 [Assembly members Hill, Nava]

Safe & Sustainable Takeout Food Packaging Act



The Problem: Expanded polystyrene foam (EPS), often referred to as Styrofoam[®] is pervasive in the environment, is extremely damaging throughout its lifecycle, and is rarely recycled. Non-foam polystyrene (PS) is also used for take-out food and is harmful in the marine environment and harmful to public health.

Workers in polystyrene products manufacturing are exposed to many harmful chemicals, including Styrene, Toluene, Xylene, Acetone, Methyl Chloride, and Methyl Ketone. Occupational exposure to Styrene increases risk of lymphoma, leukemia, lung tumors, pancreatic cancer, urinary bladder cancer, prostate cancer, and colorectal cancer. High rates of neurotoxicological effects have been reported in workers.

Public health is impacted by the use of all polystyrene food containers. Styrene can migrate from polystyrene containers into food and beverages when heated, or in contact with fatty or acidic foods. Styrene residues are found in 100% of all samples of human fat tissue. Styrene is a carcinogen in lab animal testing, a potential human carcinogen, and a neurotoxin.

The Environment is inundated with polystyrene. Plastics comprise 90 percent of floating marine debris. A study of beach debris at 43 sites along the Orange County coast found EPS was the second most abundant form of beach debris. Because it is lightweight and floats, EPS is easily swept from streets and through storm drains out to the ocean. In the environment, the containers break down into smaller and smaller pieces and are easily mistaken for food by marine animals. Polystyrene containers contaminated by food cannot be recycled, and other types of PS packaging (shipping materials) are rarely recycled.

Local jurisdictions spend millions cleaning litter. Caltrans spends approximately \$60 million a year to remove litter and debris from roadsides and highways, The County of Los Angeles (L.A.) spends \$18 million annually on litter cleanup and education. Since 2001, Southern California cities have spent in excess of \$1.7 billion cleaning trash out of storm drain systems leading to the L.A. River and Ballona Creek in order to comply with stormwater regulations.

The Solution: AB 1358 will support a switch to safer and more sustainable take-out food packaging choices. It will ban the use of polystyrene foam food packaging in California, following the lead of more than 30 CA cities and counties that have already enacted bans. This is a proven remedy to a pervasive and expensive local problem requiring that its use be replaced with sustainable alternatives. For example, one year after implementation of the San Francisco ordinance that prohibits the use of EPS foodware, San Francisco's annual litter audit showed a 36% decrease in EPS litter.

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