



# news release

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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## **IN-STORE PLASTIC BAG RECYCLING REQUIRED BY NEW COUNTY LAW Oct. 13 law affects stores larger than 10,000 sq. ft.**

These days it's fairly common to see recycling bins for plastic bags at major supermarkets, but Macy's, Target, Wal-Mart, Sears, PC Richards, Best Buy and Petco? Starting Monday, *every* large store in Westchester that uses plastic to bag its consumer goods will be expected to have an in-house recycling program up and running.

That's the day a new county law goes into effect requiring any retailer that provides plastic carry-out bags to its customers and occupies more than 10,000 square feet to have an in-store recycling program. That means placing a "visible" clearly marked collection bin near the entrance and then finding a way to transport and recycle them.

"A number of retailers, primarily supermarkets such as A&P, have voluntary programs to collect and recycle bags, but not everyone does. This law will ensure that everyone complies," said County Executive Andy Spano. "As damaging as they are to the environment, the bags are almost entirely recyclable and millions of pounds each year are made into durable outdoor decks and fencing."

Receptacles have to be placed in a prominent, easy-to-find location. The retailer is responsible for collecting, transporting and recycling all the bags dropped off by their customers. The stores also have to accept bags that aren't theirs.

"This new law provides families an easier and more convenient way to make Westchester a greener place to live," said County Legislator Bill Burton, chair of the Legislation Committee. "The fact that receptacles for the piles of plastic bags that seem to accumulate so quickly at home will be in so many locations throughout the county ensures the success of this recycling initiative."

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"Those who create and distribute a product, however useful, should be responsible for its collection and disposal so that it doesn't damage our environment," said County Legislator Tom Abinanti, chair of the Environment & Energy Committee.

"We are committed to environmental protection, including reducing litter and lessening the impact of plastics as waste," said Jennifer MacLeod, senior vice-president of marketing and communications, The Great Atlantic & Pacific Tea Company, Inc. "We do this by providing customers with products, information and incentives to put environment friendly principles into practice. We are excited to see this law enacted and proud to be a leader in environmental initiatives."

Besides providing recycling bins in all stores, the company reduces the number of plastic bags used by encouraging the use of "paid" stickers as an alternative on large items and increasing the number of items placed in each bag. It also encourages customers to use shopping totes instead of plastic bags.

The law, proposed by Spano, was approved by the Board of Legislators last spring as a way to continue the county's effort to keep plastic bags out of the garbage. Spano noted that the average life of a plastic bag is 20 minutes and plastic bag litter has reached "mammoth proportions."

Plastic bags are damaging to the environment not only because they pile up in landfills and litter the landscape but also because they are made from polyethylene, a petroleum product, which may take as long as 500 years to degrade.

Passing a law is just the county's latest effort to be a good environmental citizen. More than 813,000 bags have already been collected through local school programs, Household Recycling Days and a "Plastic Bag Recycling Day" at Playland where youngsters exchanged plastic bags for free rides. Another program had marinas helping the county collect 26,000 pounds of another type of plastic – shrink boat wrap.

For more information on recycling, visit [www.westchestergov.com/recycling](http://www.westchestergov.com/recycling) or call 211.