

Environment Awareness Campaign



Say **NO to Plastic Carry Bags**



Pollution Control Board, Assam
Bamunimaidam, Guwahati - 21

PLASTIC CARRY BAGS: A GROWING CHALLENGE

Generation of plastic waste, more especially the single-use plastic carry bags, is increasing rapidly with the economic growth, and changing consumption and production patterns. The changing lifestyle of people, and careless attitude and ignorance towards the environment are further intensifying the problem. It has become an almost accepted part of shopping culture for the people in our towns and cities. Even the cities with low economic growth have started producing more plastic waste due to increased use of plastic shopping bags. Although the plastic carry bags are playing a crucial role in the life of modern man, the ways we are using and disposing them are resulting in serious disruption to environmental and public health, which cannot be ignored. A huge quantity of plastic bags enters our environment as litter every year. This increase has turned into a major challenge for local authorities responsible for solid waste management and sanitation.

DID YOU KNOW

- Currently, more than 100 million tonnes of plastic materials are used annually in the world.
- Plastic bags are made of various chemicals which are mainly toxic and are harmful to human health and environment.
- After food waste and paper waste, plastic waste is the third major constituent of municipal waste in cities and its total volume in the world is about 10000 tonnes annually.
- Most of the plastic carry bags are made for single use only, once and after use thrown away as waste to immediate environment.
- About 8 million tonnes of plastic waste get accumulated in seas and oceans annually.
- It is estimated that by 2050, the volume of plastic waste in seas and oceans will be more than fishes and the stomach of about 99 percent of sea birds will be filled with plastic waste.
- Plastic does not degrade easily. It takes hundreds of years to degrade.

IMPACT OF PLASTIC BAGS ON ENVIRONMENT AND HEALTH

- There are several chemicals associated with material itself, such as – Bisphenol A, phthalates and flame retardants. These all have known negative effects on human and animal health.
- Landscapes littered with plastic bags are hazardous to wildlife and spoil the beauty of the landscapes.
- Littered plastic bags choke drains and cause stagnant water which becomes an ideal habitat for mosquitoes and other parasites, in return contributes flooding during rainy session.
- Plastic waste dumped in water causes water contamination and toxify aquatic ecosystem.



Plastic bags pollute water

- Garbage mixed with plastics causes problems in landfill operations and may release toxins into the ground water from landfill sites.
- Plastic in soil can pollute the soil. It lessens growth of plants and trees by blocking absorption of minerals, water and other nutrients, and also reduces the water percolation rate.
- Toxic chemicals in plastic bag may get into the food chain through animals that ingest small particles of plastic and can have serious health impacts.
- It is estimated that about 600 species of marine animals are affected by plastic waste and about one million sea birds and 100000 marine animals die annually from entanglement and ingestion of plastic every year.



Burning of Plastic bags create environmental problems



Littered plastic bags choke drains

THINGS WE CAN DO

A. Refuse

- Avoid plastic carry bags while shopping, take reusable alternatives like natural fiber bags, compostable bags, cloth bags, string bags, or baskets with you.
- Refuse to take items in plastic bags at grosser's shop and ask for 'natural fiber bags' or other 'green bags'.

B. Reduce

- Count the number of plastic bags you use and aim to reduce that number each week.
- Avoid putting items that already have handles in plastic bags.
- Consolidate purchases into one bag rather than getting a new bag at each time.
- Avoid using small plastic bags as bin liners; instead give the bin a quick rinse afterwards.

C. Reuse

- Reuse plastic bags at home for – freezing food, storage of cloth and packing of other household items after necessary cleaning.
- It can be reused for shopping.

D. Recycle

- Find a local vendor that offers recycling facility for plastic bags and donate or sale your used plastic carry bags, so that recyclers can use them to produce other materials.
- Plastic waste can be used for road construction.

- E. Don't litter open public places or road side drains with plastic bags or do not dispose them with other solid wastes.



Use natural fiber bags, compostable bags, cloth bags, string bags, or baskets etc. for shopping

F. Don't burn plastic bags. Burning of plastic release toxic gases into atmosphere, causes air pollution, thus causes harms to public health and animals.

PLASTIC WASTE: LEGAL FRAMEWORK

The Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change to the Government of India has published the new 'Plastic Waste Management Rules, 2016' on 18th March 2017 in supersession of the 'Plastic Waste (Management & Handling) Rules, 2011'. Some important provisions of the Rules, which are to be strictly followed by all manufacturers, importers, stockists, distributors, sellers, and users of plastic and compostable carry bags are –

- Thickness of petro-based plastic carry bags/films shall not be <math><50\mu\text{m}</math> (fifty micron), except compostable carry bags.
- Sachets/Pouches used for packing of pan masala, tobacco & gutkha shall not be made of plastic material.
- Retailers and the street vendors shall not sell or provide commodities to consumers in plastic carry bags or plastic sheets or multilayered packaging, which are not manufactured and labelled or marked, as prescribed under the Rule.
- The shopkeepers and street vendors willing to provide plastic carry bags for dispensing any commodity shall register with Local Body.
- Compostable (bio-based) carry bags can be the alternative to petro-based plastic carry bags.
- All the unlicensed and unregistered plastic carry bags/films manufacturing units running in residential areas (unapproved area) shall be closed down by the concerned District Magistrates/Deputy Commissioners/ Municipal Authority/ SPCBs/PCCs under their jurisdiction.
- Local Bodies and Gram Panchayats shall ensure that open burning of plastic wastes does not take place.
- Any person found violating the provisions of the Rules shall be liable to 5 years imprisonment or fine up to Rs.1.0 lakh or both under Environment (Protection) Act (EPA), 1986

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