

DO YOU REALLY NEED A PLASTIC BAG? CAMPAIGN

GUIDELINES FOR RETAILERS

The Do You Really Need a Plastic Bag? campaign (DYNAPB?) asks retailers in Newry City to do three simple things:

1. **Brief all your staff in advance about the campaign and explain why it is important to highlight the issue of plastic bags.**

It is critical that staff understand the reason behind the campaign in order to be fully committed to promoting it.

A good idea is to make staff aware of the cost and numbers of free bags your business gives away each week/month/year.

Explain to your staff the environmental cost of plastic bags – they create litter and never rot, so stay around in our landfill sites forever

2. **Ensure all your members of staff ask the simple question “Do you really need a plastic bag”? to all customers during the campaign week.**

This is an essential part of the campaign and it is vital that all staff are aware of the need to ask the question.

3. **Display the campaign poster prominently in your premises during the campaign week.**

By displaying the campaign materials at the very least you are telling your customers that you are supporting the campaign!

Do You Really Need A Plastic Bag? Campaign is based on encouraging the customer to **THINK** before accepting a new plastic bag. The campaign is purely designed to highlight the financial cost and environmental effect of plastic bag use. However, retailers who wish to go one step further can also do the following:

Provide customers with an alternative to a “new” plastic bag.

Ideas include asking customers to bring back old plastic bags which your shop can then reuse. Try to reuse cardboard boxes as much as possible instead of new plastic bags. Provide customers where possible with reuseable shopping bags or paper bags.

Operate a voluntary donation scheme for a charity

Where customers accept plastic bags during the campaign week ask them to make a voluntary donation to a charity such as the Southern Area Hospice Services. This idea mimics the plastic bag tax that currently operates in the Republic of Ireland. By asking customers to give a **voluntary** donation you are helping a very worthwhile cause, which most customers will be happy to contribute to, while at the same time drawing attention to the cost of plastic bags.

Whatever you decide is the extent of your business' involvement in the Do You Really Need a Plastic Bag? Campaign, you can be sure your participation will be a very valid part of the success of the whole campaign!

SOME PLASTIC BAG FACTS!



It is quite likely that when your staff ask the question DYRNAPB? that some customers will engage them in conversation on the issue.

So here are some facts about plastic to help the discussion along :

Did you realise that plastic has only been used in industry since the 1950s.

Since then the world's annual consumption of plastic has increased from around 5 million tonnes in the 1950s to nearly 100 million tonnes today.

Therefore we produce and use 20 times more plastic today than we did 50 years ago!

What is plastic made from?

It is estimated that 4% of the world's annual oil production is used in plastics production and an additional 3-4% during manufacture.

Plastic is the material of choice in nearly half of all packaged goods and accounts for 35% of UK plastic consumption.

There are about 50 different groups of plastics, with hundreds of different varieties. Carrier bags and bin liners are made from **Low Density Polyethylene**.

Every year, an estimated 17½ billion plastic bags are given away by UK supermarkets. This is equivalent to over 290 bags for every person in the UK.

In Northern Ireland we use 230 million plastic bags per year. That means on average in the Newry and Mourne District Council area shoppers use a staggering 14 million plastic bags each year!

One tonne of plastics is equivalent to 20,000 two litre drinks bottles or 120,000 carrier bags.

More than **7,000 plastic bags** were found on UK beaches during Beachwatch 2006 - that's 40 bags for every kilometre of beach surveyed.

Plastic bags release **toxic gases** when they burn; they create **stagnant pools** which can become a breeding ground for **malarial mosquitoes**; and they suffocate or disrupt the indigestion of animals that accidentally consume them.

Plastic bags have been found in the stomachs of many marine animals including endangered species such as leatherback turtles. Ingestion (swallowing) of plastic bags can result in blockages, internal infections, starvation and death.

The average plastic bag is used for just 8 minutes before it's thrown away - but can take up to 100 years to decompose.