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STYROFOAM PRODUCTS TO BE BANNED AT COUNTY FACILITIES
Vendors and employees will be required to find environmentally friendly alternatives

Continuing to lead by example when it comes to protecting the environment, Westchester County is doing away with disposable products containing Styrofoam and requiring vendors who serve food at all county facilities to do the same.

Concessionaires were recently notified that, effective Jan. 1, the use of all Styrofoam disposable products will be prohibited for use in all Parks, Recreation and Conservation facilities. This includes cups, plates and “clam-shell” boxes for take-out use. The county itself has stopped purchasing foodware products containing Styrofoam, also known as polystyrene. Departments can use up their existing stock but when they run out they have to order alternative products.

“Styrofoam is a petroleum-based plastic that can damage our health and just ends up littering our environment,” said County Executive Andy Spano. “We want people to see that there are better choices out there that are biodegradable and non-polluting. By taking this first step, we’re confident we will encourage other governments and businesses to do the same.”

The county is encouraging the use of biodegradable or recyclable disposable containers and offers suggestions about where to purchase substitute products. The directive also prohibits the purchase of packing “peanuts.”

Spano noted that the county is a step ahead of the state which currently has a bill pending that would prohibit the use of Styrofoam by food service providers, including state departments, contractors, restaurants and retail food vendors. Providers would have to use alternative products that are compostable or recyclable

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unless no affordable alternative exists. The law would also affect municipalities and their contractors.

Styrofoam is considered harmful to the environment because it's made with petroleum: a non-sustainable and heavily polluting resource. Virtually immune to biological decomposition and resistant to compacting, Styrofoam takes up more space in landfills than other types of materials, such as paper. Toxic chemicals that can threaten human health can also leach out of these products into the food that they contain (especially when heated in a microwave).

The components of Styrofoam - Benzene, Styrene and Ethylene – are all listed on the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)'s hazardous substance list. Due to the physical properties of polystyrene foam, the EPA states, “that such materials can also have serious impacts on human health, wildlife, the aquatic environment and the economy.”

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