

Dear Business Owner and Manager,

We are here on behalf of the City of South Lake Tahoe and the League to Save Lake Tahoe to ask for your help in protecting our local environment from harmful plastic pollution.

Businesses like yours are a huge part of the South Shore community. Your customers are locals like us and visitors who come here to experience Tahoe's natural beauty. Plastic pollution threatens all of that. We want to share some shocking facts about single-use plastics and remind you about the City of South Lake Tahoe's ordinances that will help reduce plastic waste in our environment.

Disturbing Plastic Facts

- Between 2014 and 2023, the League's staff and volunteers removed 155,737 pieces of single-use plastic from Tahoe's environment, including 36,075 plastic caps, 23,047 plastic bottles, 31,424 polystyrene items, 19,290 straws and stirrers, and 8,707 utensils. Unfortunately, much more plastic has escaped into the environment and the Lake.
- Single-use plastics like bags, straws, cutlery, and bottles are only used for a few minutes, but they stay in our environment forever. Discarded plastics are particularly damaging to our water quality because they are rarely recycled, they break down into smaller pieces (microplastics), and they persist in our environment.
- Plastics clog storm drains, leach chemicals into the environment, and harm the Lake and wildlife.
- Bottled water contains 200% more microplastics* than our clean Tahoe Tap water directly from the Lake! Microplastics from bottled water may result in potential health impacts. (*frontiersin.org/articles/10.3389/fchem.2018.00407/full Sherri A. Mason)

Styrofoam / Expanded Polystyrene (EPS) Ordinance

The City of South Lake Tahoe's Expanded Polystyrene (EPS or Styrofoam) Ordinance has been in effect since 2018 and the current updates are in effect as of January 1, 2023. This ordinance prohibits the use of EPS food and drink containers by food providers and retailers in the City and requires that single-use plastic containers and related foodservice ware items be made available only on request. This includes cups, bowls, plates, trays, cartons, clamshell containers, cup lids, utensils, chopsticks, straws, and stirrers, and plastic condiment cups and packets. Grocery stores and retailers cannot sell disposable foam coolers, cups, plates, bowls and packing peanuts, including meat, fish, and food trays prepared or packed outside of South Lake Tahoe. Included with this letter is a guide to help you find alternatives to plastics - and there are more options all the time. Non-compliance with this ordinance may result in fines up to \$500 per violation.

Plastic Water Bottle Ordinance

The City of South Lake Tahoe's plastic water bottle ordinance went into effect for City-run and permitted events in April, 2023. The plastic water bottle ban expands to all businesses in the City on April 22, 2024. The ordinance prohibits retail sale or distribution of any single-use plastic bottled water under one gallon. While non-plastic alternatives do not violate the ordinance, we encourage refilling with Tahoe Tap instead of promoting single-use alternatives. Non-compliance with this ordinance may result in fines up to \$500 per violation.

Your role

Choose to refuse - say no thanks to disposable plastics and choose reusables when possible. Provide to-go utensils and straws on request only. Choose lower-impact products like cardboard, paper, foil, recycled materials instead of plastics. Together, we can Keep Tahoe Blue.

Best regards,

Marilee Movius and Kelci Brown
Community Engagement Team
League to Save Lake Tahoe

Sara Letton
Sustainability Coordinator
City of South Lake Tahoe

