



Plastic Straws in Rhode Island

What You Need to Know

Single-use plastic straws can be a source of waste and litter. Under Rhode Island law, food service establishments cannot provide a single-use plastic straw to a customer unless asked.

Waiting until a customer asks for a straw can help lower plastic waste, while meeting customer needs and preferences. It's important to remember that people with certain medical or physical conditions may need a straw to drink a beverage.



Single-Use Plastic Straw Definition

A single-use, disposable tube made mostly from plastic that is used for drinking purposes

Acceptable Alternatives to Plastic Straws

Straws made from non-plastic materials are not impacted and may be distributed as normal.



Frequently Asked Questions

Are plastic straws banned in Rhode Island food service establishments?

Plastic straws are not banned. Food service establishments can no longer provide a plastic straw unless a customer asks for one. They are able to provide non-plastic straws without being asked and may provide a plastic straw if a customer requests one.

Can a food service establishment have plastic straws available to the public in a dispenser or other self-serve display?

Plastic straws can only be provided if a customer asks for one. Plastic straws cannot be available to the public in a self-serve dispenser or display. Non-plastic straws can be available in a self-serve dispenser or display.

How do I know if a straw is considered a single-use plastic straw under the law?

Straws that are intended to be used once and disposed of are considered single-use straws. Straws made of plastic include plastic derived from either petroleum or a biologically based polymer, such as corn or other plant sources. It does not include a straw made from non-plastic materials.

Enforcement

The Rhode Island Department of Health is responsible for enforcing this law and issuing violations. Food service establishments will be educated on the law's requirements and may receive a written notice for the first and second violation. After the second violation, the establishment will be fined.

- **First violation:** Notice of violation
- **Second violation:** Notice of violation
- **Additional violations:** \$25 fine for each additional violation (not to exceed \$300 annually)



Rhode Island Department of Health, Center for Food Protection
For more information, call 401-222-2750