

Single Use Water Bottle Ban: What Retailers Need to Know

What does the bylaw say?

The bylaw makes it unlawful for commercial businesses to sell non-carbonated, unflavored drinking water in single-use plastic bottles of less than one gallon in the Town of Hingham, beginning January 1, 2024. There are no restrictions on residents' personal use of these products within town.



What is the penalty for non-compliance?

Stores or people who sell this product would be subject to the following fines: first violation gets a written warning, second violation gets a \$100 fine, third violation gets a \$200 fine, fourth violation and subsequent violations get a \$300 fine.

What can businesses sell instead?

Businesses can continue to sell water in single-use aluminum bottles or cans, glass bottles, boxes, or any other non-plastic packaging. The most eco-friendly choice is an aluminum bottle or can that can be reused and recycled. Please note that Hingham does NOT currently offer recycling options for boxed water. Businesses can also continue to sell water in plastic packaging larger than one gallon.

Hingham has also published a [Hingham on Tap](#) tap map to direct residents to public bottle-filling stations. If you would like your business to be featured on our map, please email cleanergreener@hingham-ma.gov.

Who else is doing this?

Twenty-four other Massachusetts communities already have similar bylaws in effect, including fifteen communities on Cape Cod and all of Martha's Vineyard and Nantucket. Cleaner Greener Hingham is reaching out to partner organizations on the South Shore in the hopes of expanding this bylaw to neighboring communities.

Why don't we ban all single-use plastic bottles?

Hingham has always taken a thoughtful approach. After much research of what has worked for businesses and residents in other communities, this seemed the most logical next step in reducing single use plastics. Water is easily accessible, safe, and available through hydration stations, bubblers, and the tap. Many people already bring a reusable bottle with them and most students in the schools do so.



Why should Hingham take action?

Hingham is lucky to have a stunning coastline as one of our main attractions. In fact, it is one of the reasons people visit our Town. Unfortunately, coastlines like ours are the main entry point for the 86 million metric tons of plastic estimated to be in the ocean. As residents of a coastal community, we have a unique opportunity and responsibility to limit our plastic consumption where possible in order to help keep our coastline healthy and pristine for generations to come.

This picture from the blog TrashPaddler shows debris collected on a paddle between Hingham Harbor and Spectacle Island.

How does this bylaw align with Hingham's goals?

Hingham is an environmentally-conscious community. The recently revised Master Plan lists protecting the environment and preparing for climate change as a top goal. In 2021, the Town adopted a goal of net zero carbon emissions by 2040 and has since released a Climate Action Plan, which includes calls for restricting single use plastics, such as water bottles. [Read the Plan here](#). Plastic production, disposal, and incineration is a carbon-intensive process (equaling 190 coal power plants in 2019) that is not in line with our voted upon goals.

But don't residents recycle their bottles?

Estimates vary, but it is believed that less than 20% of plastics will actually be recycled. The rest will be landfilled, burned, or end up as litter on land or in the ocean. When plastics are recycled, they almost always require the addition of new “virgin” plastic, which requires the extraction of fossil fuels, before they can be made into a new product. Producing products with recycled plastic is also more expensive than using new plastic, further discouraging this type of production. Aluminum, on the other hand, has a high recycling rate and can also be safely reused (single use plastic water bottles cannot).

Who can I talk to if I have questions about this bylaw?

Please direct all questions regarding compliance to healthdirector@hingham-ma.gov.

For help identifying alternatives for sale or to be included on Hingham on Tap, please email cleanergreener@hingham-ma.gov.