



SF Environment

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A Department of the City and County of San Francisco



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Press Release

New Local Environmental Laws Go Into Effect in San Francisco

Amid uncertainty at national level, San Francisco continues to lead with local environmental policies aimed at reducing harmful greenhouse gas emissions

SAN FRANCISCO, CA – When President-elect Trump is sworn in as the 45th President in January, San Francisco will already have three new laws in effect that will further the City's commitment to reducing waste and energy use, and reducing harmful greenhouse gas emissions.

Starting January 1, 2017, San Francisco will enact the toughest ban on polystyrene foam products in the United States and will require solar panels or green roofs to be installed in all new public and private buildings.

During the legislative session of 2016, the San Francisco Board of Supervisors overwhelmingly approved a number of new environmental policies, which were supported and signed into law by Mayor Ed Lee. The new laws go into effect starting January 1, 2017 and include a few firsts:

Prohibiting Polystyrene Foam

San Francisco is the first municipality in the nation to pass a comprehensive ban on the sale and distribution of food service ware and packing materials made from polystyrene foam. Unlike harder plastics, polystyrene foam (such as Styrofoam™) contains a harmful chemical used in the production process called "styrene" that has been linked to cancer as well as reproductive and developmental disorders. Polystyrene foam breaks down into smaller, non-biodegradable pieces that impact wildlife and pollute waterways and the environment.

Starting January 1, 2017, San Francisco businesses may no longer sell, distribute or use products made from materials like polystyrene foam, which are not recyclable or compostable in San Francisco's collection program. The new ordinance is an expansion upon the City's 2007 law which banned polystyrene foam food ware, such as take out containers at restaurants, and now applies to over the counter products such as cups, plates, packing peanuts, wine shippers, and ice coolers.

“Polystyrene foam is a problematic material because, for one, it cannot be recycled in our three bin system and ends up in the landfill. It also crumbles into small bits that are easily transported by wind and water, does not biodegrade, and is often ingested by wildlife,” said **Debbie Raphael, Director of the San Francisco Department of Environment**. “By requiring less-hazardous and more recyclable alternatives, this law not only supports our City’s zero waste goal, but helps to protect the public health and safety of San Francisco residents, as well as our natural environment, waterways, and wildlife.”

More than 100 U.S. cities have ordinances restricting polystyrene food ware or packaging materials. San Francisco’s ordinance is now the most expansive ban on polystyrene in the country because of the breadth of products covered.

Solar and/or Green Roof Requirement for all New Construction

Another new law will make San Francisco the first major municipality in the country to require developers to install solar panels or green spaces on the roofs of new residential and commercial buildings up to 10 floors or less. The “Better Roofs” ordinance is an extension of an existing California law that requires all buildings up to 10 floors or less to designate at least 15% of the rooftop space for solar.

San Francisco’s law, which goes into effect on January 1st, takes the state law one step further by actually requiring the installation of solar panels, or where not feasible, a living green roof. When the law is fully implemented, it could increase San Francisco’s solar capacity by 30%, which would be enough to power thousands of San Francisco homes and help the City reach its goal of sourcing 100% of its electricity from renewable energy by 2030.

New Green Building Requirements

Green buildings have achieved extraordinary city-wide market penetration in San Francisco with more than 100 million square feet of space earning LEED (Leadership in Energy & Environmental Design) certification to date. Starting January 1, 2017, all new construction in San Francisco will need to meet more rigorous LEED green building standards to comply with state and local building code updates.

Currently, close to 50% of San Francisco’s greenhouse gas emissions can be attributed to the built environment – particularly the energy use and environmental impacts of building construction and operations. Green building standards tend to improve the overall performance of buildings from a resource management standpoint and, because of their design and operations, reduce greenhouse gas emissions. The updates to the City’s Green Building Code come on the heels of San Francisco being named by CBRE Group, Inc. as the top market for Green Building in 2016.

Looking Ahead

“Thanks to Mayor Lee and the Board of Supervisors, San Francisco is sending a strong environmental message at the start of 2017,” said **Debbie Raphael, Director of the San Francisco Department of Environment**. “Public policies are a reflection of our values, and these new laws make clear that San Francisco is willing to take bold and swift action to achieve results that will make a difference for our communities and our planet.”

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Additional information about these new policies are available at:
www.sfenvironment.org/policy/environment-code

- [Food Service Ware and Packaging Waste Reduction Ordinance](#)
- [Better Roofs Ordinance](#)
- [Green Building Code Update](#)

About the San Francisco Department of the Environment

The San Francisco Department of the Environment creates visionary policies and innovative programs to improve, enhance, and preserve San Francisco's urban and natural environment, leading the way toward a sustainable future. By developing wide-ranging environmental programs, fostering groundbreaking legislation, working collaboratively with key partners, and educating the public on comprehensive sustainability practices, the department makes it easy for everyone in San Francisco to protect their environment.

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