

Expanded Polystyrene Ban

Heather Church | September 2025



DEPARTMENT OF
ECOLOGY
State of Washington

What is expanded polystyrene?



Expanded polystyrene (EPS) is a lightweight material that is made when polystyrene beads are expanded during processing and placed into molds to create products.

Typically used for packaging, building, and food service.

Often mistakenly called Styrofoam™

Problems with expanded polystyrene foam

- Expanded polystyrene materials are difficult and expensive to recycle.
- They aren't accepted in most of Washington's residential recycling programs.
- These materials are extremely brittle and break easily into tiny pieces, contaminating the environment.



2023 – EPS packing peanuts

Expanded polystyrene packing peanuts are banned.

Does not include:

- Block or sheet expanded polystyrene foam
- Compostable packing peanuts
 - Must be labeled appropriately



2024 - EPS food service products

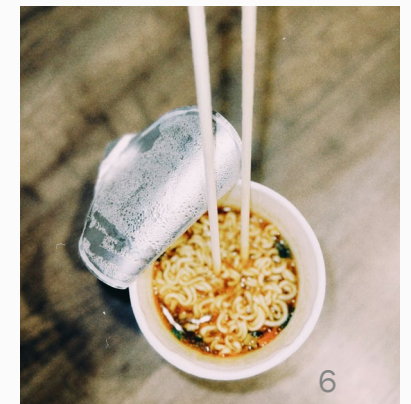
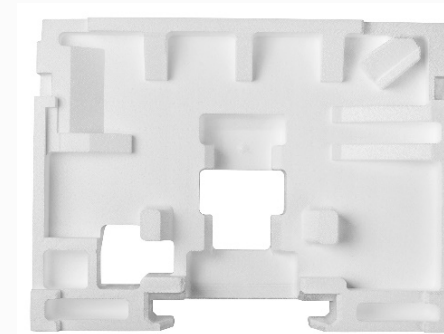
The following expanded polystyrene foam food service products are banned:

- Foam coolers
- Plates
- Bowls
- Cups
- Clam shell “to-go” style containers
- Trays

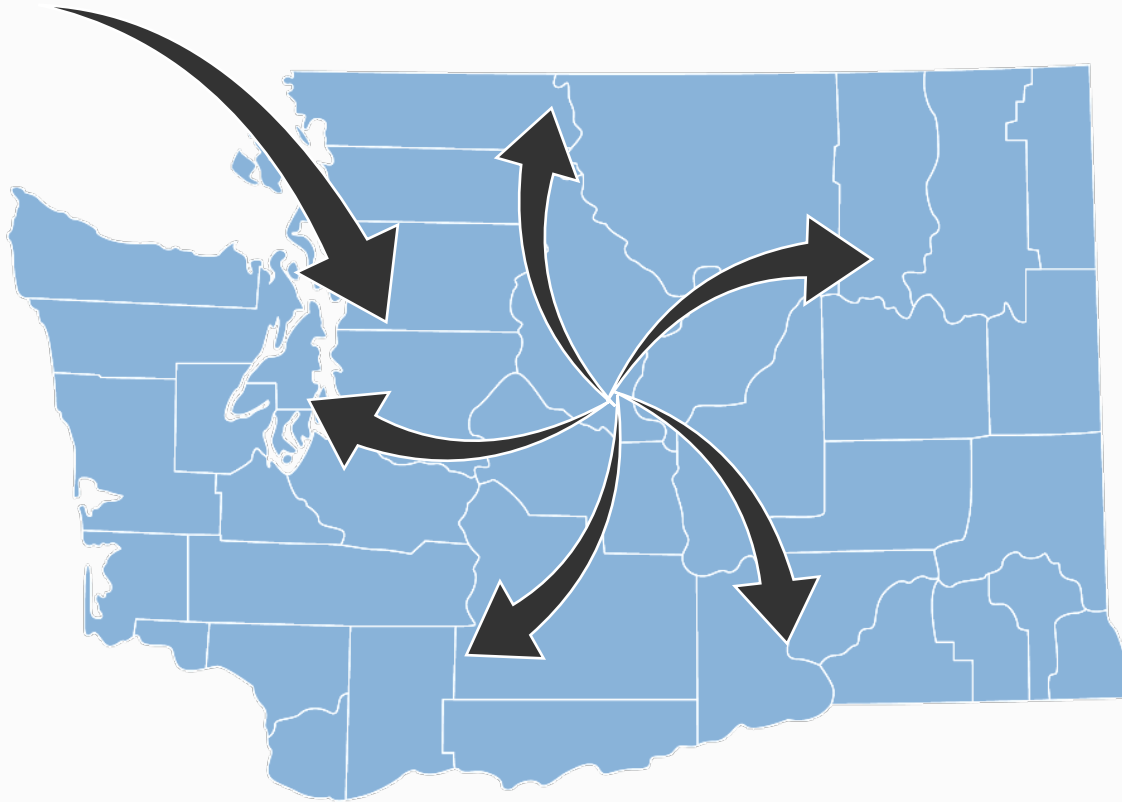


Exemptions/not covered items

- Containers used for drugs, medical devices, or biological materials
- When shipping perishable commodities from a wholesale or retail establishment
- Packaging for raw, uncooked, or butchered meat, fish, poultry, or seafood, vegetables, fruit, or egg cartons
- Block or sheet expanded polystyrene foam
- Prepackaged food containers (ex. noodle cups)



Who is impacted by this law?



Manufacturers and producers of the covered EPS products will no longer be allowed to distribute or sell these materials within or into Washington State.

Also impacted...

- **Businesses** that sell or use shipping/packaging materials
- **Retail establishments** (grocers, gas stations, etc.)
- **Restaurants, food trucks, fast food establishments**
- **Institutional cafeterias** (such as schools or correctional facilities)
- Retirement homes
- Religious institutions, charitable/nonprofit organizations
- Many others

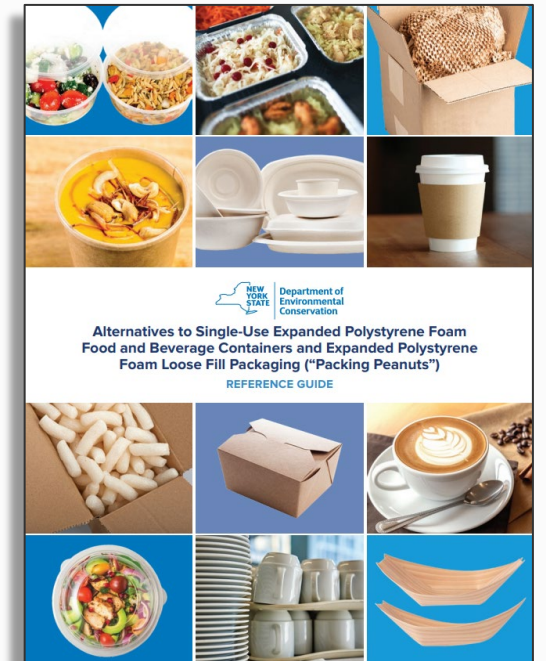


How to comply & available resources

Manufacturers and distributors must not sell banned expanded polystyrene foam items in or into Washington state.

Businesses and everyone else should not use or purchase these banned items.

Please report any items seen in use or for sale to Ecology to ensure manufacturers and distributors comply with the law.



Scan this QR code to view the EPS Ban website.





Thank you

Heather Church

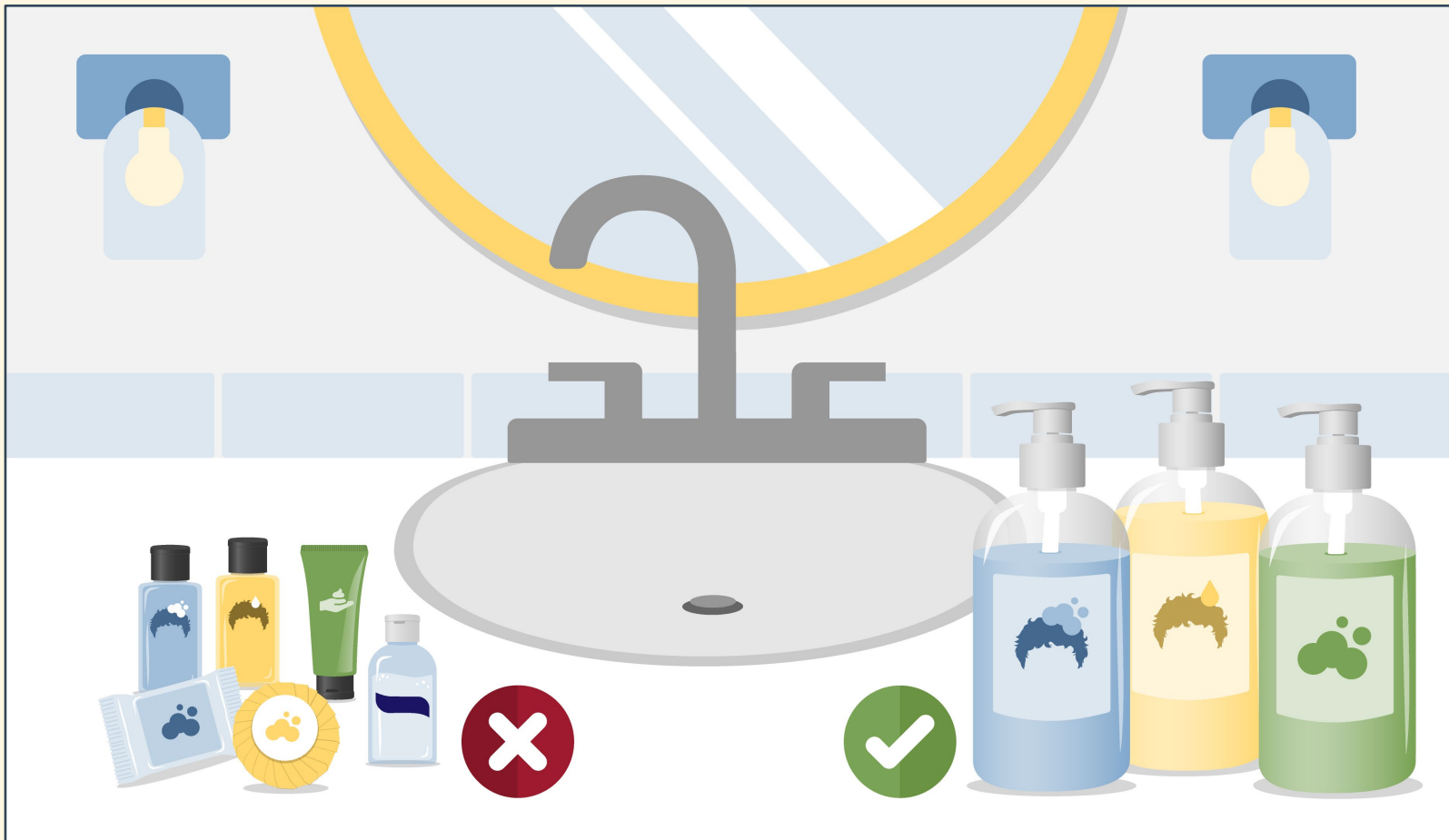
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