



2026 Washington Retail Bag Law - Quick Compliance Guide for Retailers

Washington’s statewide bag law is still in effect, with several updates that took effect **January 1, 2026**.

This guide summarizes the main statewide rules retailers and restaurants should be following now.

Paper bags 8 cents Minimum charge for compliant paper carryout bags.	Reusable Plastic film bags 12 cents Minimum charge for reusable plastic film carryout bags.	4 mil+ plastic film 16 cents total Through Dec. 31, 2027. Includes the 12-cent charge plus a 4-cent state penalty.
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Bag thickness for 2026-2027: Reusable plastic film carryout bags may remain **2.25 mil** through Dec. 31, 2027. The minimum film thickness increases to **4 mil on Jan. 1, 2028**.

What bags are allowed

- **Compliant paper carryout bags** that meet the state material and labeling standards.
- **Reusable plastic film carryout bags** that meet the durability, recycled content, labeling, and thickness requirements.
- **Certain exempt in-store bags** such as small paper bags, produce bags, bulk-item bags, meat or frozen food bags, bakery bags, prescription bags, and similar protective bags used inside the store.

Bag standards

Type	Requirements
Paper	At least 40% postconsumer recycled content, 40% nonwood renewable fiber such as wheat straw, or a combination totaling 40%; compostable; labeled on the outside with the material percentage.
Plastic film	At least 40% postconsumer recycled content; minimum lifetime of 125 uses; washable or durable and cleanable; labeled with recycled content, mil thickness, and that the bag is reusable.

Operational reminders

- Single-use plastic film bags of 0.5 mil thickness remain banned.
- Show bag charges and any applicable 4-cent penalty on the customer receipt.
- Do not charge customers using qualifying food assistance benefits, including SNAP, WIC, TANF, and FAP.
- The 8-cent and 12-cent pass-through charges are taxable retail sales and may be retained by the business. However, businesses are allowed to charge more than the required minimum fee if the purchase cost exceeds the fee amount.

The separate 4-cent penalty on 4 mil or thicker plastic film bags must be deposited into the state waste reduction, recycling, and litter control account. Repeated noncompliance may result in a civil penalty of up to \$250 per day.

Retailer action list

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review bag inventory for thickness, recycled content, and labeling. • Update POS settings so the correct charge appears automatically. • Check receipt language and line items. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Train front-end staff on charges and customer exemptions. • Confirm whether any 4 mil bags are in use before charging 16 cents total. • Keep vendor specifications and bag documentation on file.
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