

# Plastic bag ban – big bad brother or justified and necessary? essay

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Plastic bags are a scourge on the environment. They do enormous damage to the land and oceans and urgent action is required to reduce their use. Mexico City turned green? Mexico City just put in force a very strict (some say draconian) ban on plastic bags. Businesses are now banned from giving out thin non-biodegradable plastic bags in this city with a population of over 9 million.

The enforcement is what may make this ban effective. There will be severe financial penalties for business owners (up to a \$90, 000 fine) and prison sentences of up to 36 hours for those who fail to comply with the ban. Maybe we don't want to see droves of shop owners being carted off to jail. But something has to be done about the problem of plastic bags. Plastic bags is no trifle matter They may look harmless and feel small and light but consider the numbers. According to the United Nations Environment Program (UNEP), plastic bags are the second most common type of litter – with cigarette butts being the first. Plastics can take years to break down – if they break down at all.

CNN reported that 90 per cent of plastic bags in the US are NOT RECYCLED! That is utterly shocking. Plastic bags can wreak havoc on the environment. In the oceans, plastics kill marine life and devastate reefs. 100, 000 turtles and marine mammals are killed each year by plastics. Action on plastic bags is urgent A significant reduction or phasing out of plastic bags is in order. Sometimes, it takes a dramatic wake-up call to put the issue into the spotlight. Large quantities of plastics in the waterways contributed to severe flooding in Bangladesh in the late 1990s and as a result, a total ban was

imposed on plastic bags. Mexico City is the second major metropolitan area in the Western Hemisphere to ban plastic bags.

In 2007, San Francisco passed an ordinance that gave supermarkets six months to phase out plastic bags. Voluntary efforts not working? Eco-friendly individuals and those who care about their world are getting angry with plastic bags littering their environment. Local ordinances and by-laws are often initiated by ordinary citizens fed up with litter and pollution in their neighbourhoods. Voluntary actions by individuals and collective education do make a difference.

Charging shoppers for bags has also reduced use in some places. But unfortunately, there are still those not getting the message. How many times have you done your shopping with your reusable bags, stepped outside the supermarket to get on the bus and bumped into the slob with her groceries in a dozen plastic bags – getting into her SUV? As the consequences to the planet are so serious, more drastic and effective actions are required. When the carrot doesn't work, some people and businesses may need the stick.