

CITY OF PORTLAND  
MEMORANDUM

TO: Chairperson Suslovic and members of the Green Packaging Working Group

FROM: Troy Moon, Environmental Services Manager

DATE: April 5, 2013

RE: **Restaurant polystyrene survey results**

The City of Portland has many establishments that provide food to customers. From mid-March to early April staff telephoned over 40 randomly chosen restaurants and stores and spoke with 24 managers regarding the containers they used for take out and “doggie bags.”

Of the containers used, 54% use cardboard and paper products, 41% use polystyrene, 37% use compostable products, 29% use non-polystyrene plastic and 25% use aluminum containers and foil. These results reflect the use of multiple types of containers by establishments. Among the reasons cited for use, 36% cited cost issues, 28% cited environmental concerns, 24% said they liked the effectiveness of their products and 12% cited customer demand and restaurant presentation.

If an establishment was using polystyrene containers, the manager was then asked if switching to a non-polystyrene container would have an economic impact. 50% said yes, 10% said no, 40% answered that they weren’t sure. Of those who said that the switch would impact them, they were given the option of little to no impact, moderate (passing costs on to customer), large (reduction of staff and/or staff hours) or extreme (reduction of opening hours and/or closing doors for good). No establishment reported the likelihood of either reducing staff or hours, or closing their doors because of a switch to non-polystyrene products. 20% said they would experience little impact, 60% percent said they would experience a moderate impact, and 20% said they would have to look into the possibility further

The final question requested suggestions of what the City could do to assist businesses in the transition to non-polystyrene packaging. Some suggested tax subsidies or breaks to assist restaurants which are making the transition to non-polystyrene containers, or allowing tax breaks for those who are no longer using polystyrene. Several also suggested the City could sponsor recycling education efforts for citizens and businesses.

Name of Establishment \_\_\_\_\_

Name of interviewee (optional) \_\_\_\_\_

What type of containers do you use if a customer wants to take away food or bring home leftovers? \_\_\_\_\_

Why did you choose that type of container? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

(If polystyrene used) Would switching to non-styrofoam containers have an economic impact on your business? \_\_\_\_\_

(If yes) What is the degree of impact it would have?

- none to slight \_\_\_\_\_
- moderate (pass costs on to customer) \_\_\_\_\_
- large (reduction of staff and/or staff hours) \_\_\_\_\_
- extreme (reduction of opening hours and/or closing doors for good) \_\_\_\_\_
- other (explain) \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Are there actions the City could take to help businesses transition to using non-styrofoam packaging? \_\_\_\_\_

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Thank you for your participation!