POLYSTYRENE FOODWARE ORDINANCE

Who Must Follow the Ordinance?
All food vendors selling prepared food as listed in the Ordinance, including but not limited to restaurants, cafes, delis, fast-food establishments, vendors at fairs, and food trucks.

What Does the Ordinance Prohibit?
Foam and solid polystyrene food service ware. This includes but is not limited to containers, bowls, plates, and cups. Ask your supplier if you are unsure if your products are polystyrene.

Why was the Ordinance Adopted?
• Polystyrene is not recyclable.
• It often ends up as litter on streets that end up in storm drains, on beaches, and in the Bay and Ocean.
• It breaks down into smaller pieces that may be ingested by wildlife resulting in reduced appetite, and starvation.
• It contains hazardous chemicals that may leach from polystyrene containers into food and drink, and may cause cancer.

Accepted Food Service Ware:
• Biodegradable, compostable, reusable, or recyclable food service ware.
• Aluminum, plastics coded with #1, 2, 4 or 5, uncoated or coated paper, cardboard, and plastics made from corn, potatoes, sugar, or other plant-based products.

Penalties for Non-compliance:
Violations may result in fines:
• 1st = $100, 2nd = $200, 3rd = $500 (each day observed using polystyrene = 1 violation)
• San Mateo County Environmental Health Services enforces this Ordinance.

What Can My Business Do to Reduce Food Service Ware Costs?
• Allow and encourage customers to bring their own mugs to buy drinks.
• Charge a “take-out fee” to cover the cost difference.
• Use reusable dishes and cups instead of disposable ones for “dine-in” customers.

For more information, call Environmental Health Services at (650) 372-6200.