

1. What is a single-use plastic?

UMW Sustainability defines single-use plastics as a disposable plastic item that is manufactured and intended to be used once and thrown away.

2. What items (if any) are exempt?

Exemptions may be made in the cases of public health, public safety or if no viable alternative exists. All additional cases should adhere to the single-use plastic purchasing program standards. Please email sustainability@umw.edu for questions or concerns regarding exemptions.

3. What about single-use plastic items currently in my department's inventory?

Since the program's beginning in 2021, departments were encouraged to begin the process of depleting single-use plastic inventories. In the case any remaining inventory of single-use plastic items still exists, items should continue to be used. Currently, if not already, all departments should be transitioning to alternatives or actively planning on transitioning to available alternatives. For questions or assistance in this process, please email sustainability@umw.edu

4. What is the current timeline for complete reduction?

UMW will follow a 25% reduction per-year timeline to phase-out and eliminate the buying, selling and distribution of non-medical single-use plastics.

25 % reduction by December 31, 2022

50 % reduction by December 31, 2023

75 % reduction by December 31, 2024

100 % reduction by December 31, 2025

5. Does this program immediately impact specific items?

Yes, this program calls for the *immediate* cessation of buying, selling or distributing of...

- Plastic cutlery (alternatives include reusable/compostable cutlery)
- Plastic & Polystyrene food containers (alternatives include reusable or compostable food containers)
- Plastic straws (alternatives include reusable or compostable straws)
- Single-use plastics bags (alternatives include paper or reusable bags)
- Plastic water bottles (alternatives include reusable water bottles, aluminum cans or water "hydration stations")

6. Does this program include plastic trash bags?

Yes, the University is actively researching alternatives to single-use trash bags. Until then trash bags will be used as normal.

7. What about the purchase or use of Balloons? Glitter/Confetti?

The Single-use Phase Out program additionally calls the immediate cessation of purchase for non-mylar balloons and non-compostable (or “non-natural”) glitter/confetti. This includes standard rubber balloons and plastic-based glitter.

8. Are student organizations required to comply with the single-use plastic phase-out?

Yes, this program applies to all UMW departments, programs, and facilities. Groups are encouraged to focus on consistent reduction of single-use plastic and available alternatives in future student organization programming and events.

9. What are defined as acceptable “alternatives” to single-use plastic?

Alternatives must be either Reusable, Compostable, or Recyclable.

Reusable - Must be durable and intended/manufactured for multiple uses.

Compostable - Must degrade into natural elements in either purpose-built composting bin or within 180 at a commercial composting facility

Recyclable - Must fit collection site standards to be sent for recycling (More recycling information found [here](#))

10. Does this program apply to university contractors/vendors as well?

Yes, outside organizations, caterers, and companies on contract with UMW will be expected to follow UMW’s plastic phase-out program.

Any additional questions? Email us at sustainability@umw.edu.

