

Fall Business Forum

# Zero Waste during the Time of **COVID-19**

October 29, 2020

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**Zero Waste is** a comprehensive, contemporary approach to sustainable materials management. It includes recycling and composting of discarded materials, but it has a special emphasis on upstream, proactive Waste Prevention strategies and Reuse methods to reduce the amount of waste generated in the first place. It also emphasizes the 'highest and best use' of recycled materials with a focus on integrating locally collected recyclables into the local economy as manufacturing feedstock. This is the Circular Economy.

**In the absence of Waste Prevention and Reuse,  
Recycling systems simply accommodate wastefulness.**

**Zero Waste Humboldt introduced the ZW movement to the Redwood Coast in 2011, and is the only local organization specializing solely in Zero Waste solutions.**

Landfills and incineration are major causes of greenhouse gas emissions. The energy and natural resources used to manufacture single-use and wasteful packaging and products must be reduced.

**ZWH concentrates on Waste Prevention - upstream, proactive, at the point-of-purchase changes in individual and business decisions and habits.**

**ZWH provides 3 main services:**

**Public Education aimed at behavior change.**

**Advocacy & Policy Development**

**Training and Technical Assistance is in greatest demand.**



# When the Pandemic Hit, Where Did You Go for Information?

## Best Sources for Information

Zero Waste Humboldt always recommends to food and beverage-serving organizations, businesses, and events to confer with Humboldt County Public Health Department – Environmental Health Services staff.

They are knowledgeable and helpful. The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention website <https://www.cdc.gov/> is also a source of regularly updated information about the coronavirus.

## Conditions Before COVID19

Before COVID19, consumers, businessowners, and local government had been successfully influenced by a long-term, well-financed propaganda marketing campaign that had convinced us that single use and plastics are safer, cleaner, better, cheaper, more modern/cooler than the previous reuse systems of washing, refillable, returnable. The Petrochemical Industry – manufacturers of single use plastics – have a 40+ year Record of Misleading the Public.

## What Are The Facts?

On October 5<sup>th</sup>, the CDC released new guidelines. The coronavirus is transmitted through the air. "It may also be possible to get COVID-19 by touching a surface or object that has the virus on it and then touching own mouth, nose, or eyes, but this is not thought to be the main way the virus spreads."

**Basic Rule of Thumb: 1-Washable/Reusable Single Use. 2-Paper/Fiber. 3- Plastic Single Use.**



## **What are the Facts? ---Staying Safe Does Not Require Disposable, Single Use Plastics.**

The U.S. Food & Drug Administration emphasizes 10 Top Actions to protect yourself, grocery store workers, and other shoppers. These actions include the basics of wiping down the grocery cart handle with disinfectant wipes, maintain 6 feet or more from others, put your mask on before you enter, and wash your hands before and after shopping. In this list, FDA clearly states: "Again, there is no evidence of food packaging being associated with the transmission of COVID-19. However, if you wish, you can wipe down product packaging and allow it to air dry, as an extra precaution." This list does not include using more single use plastic bags and wrapping everything you buy in extra plastics.

### **Research**

The petrochemical industry has taken advantage of the public's fears about the pandemic to promote single use plastics. There is no evidence that plastics are cleaner or safer. Research samples tested in Wuhan, China hospitals earlier in 2020 on air and surfaces such as floors, plastic trash cans, metal sickbed handrails, cloth PPE, and air outlets indicated that floors, probably from gravity, were among the highest rate of positivity for COVID-19. In another study comparing the length of time COVID-19 remains on several surfaces, including cloth, wood, metal, paper, and plastic, plastic was the surface where COVID-19 seemed to linger the longest. Research will continue on how COVID-19 is transmitted and the steps we can take to keep safe and slow the spread.

### **Plan Ahead and Get Organized to Reduce Waste.**

When you order a meal from a local restaurant

During your Stay At Home time, rethink and redesign your kitchen space to reduce waste.

Do your own kitchen science project to test accuracy of "sell before," "use before," and "best by" food labels.

Supplier Code of Ethics

**PLASTIC WARS (2020) Frontline PBS. 54 minutes**

**<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-dk3NOEgX7o>**

***“We make everybody feel  
a little uncomfortable!”***

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