

PRIVILEGE SPEECH

15th Council
Sangguniang Panlungsod
Davao City
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PLASTIC BAGS

By Councilor Pilar C. Braga, PhD

Billions of plastic bags are now used each year, and have been found even on the peaks of the Himalayan mountains. The plastic bags have created many problems, foremost of which is the way they take up landfill space, where it will stay intact into the next few millennia. That's for the plastic bags that do make their way into garbage disposal systems. Other plastic bags stray into waterways, including the ocean, where they kill marine life.

Plastic bags also block drainage systems. Bangladesh banned the bags in 2002, identifying them as the leading cause of severe flooding. When plastic bags clog drains, they also create stagnant pools of water that become a resort for mosquitoes and other disease-causing insects. I'm wondering if the rise in dengue in the Philippines might have something to do with the plastic bags in our rivers and creeks.

Like China, South Africa and certain boroughs in London are cracking down first on the thin bags, which seem to be more problematic in the way they block drainage systems.

Ironically, plastic bags were first introduced some 50 years ago as an environmentalist measure, specifically to save trees. Paper bags were being used then, with concerns that all those bags were contributing to deforestation.

Here on the homefront, a specific example is what SM-Davao is doing in paving the way for a doable but best effort to minimize the degradation of Mother Earth.

Two of its major anchors – the SM Department Store and SM Supermarket – have shifted into using biodegradable bags and the green bag respectively.

Using biodegradable bags, SM Department Store advocates the care for Mother Nature. Tagged as Oxo-Biodegradable Plastics or OBPs these are conventional plastic as polyethylene, polypropylene and polystyrene added with a proprietary mixture that accelerates the breakdown of the chemical structure of the plastics.

Unlike other polyolefin products such as grocery and garbage bags, food wraps and liners for diapers which after use are discarded. The OBPs degrades into a form that is safely absorbed into the eco-system in a timeframe that is similar to that of "natural" products such as straw, Kraft paper and leaves.

OBPs are widely used now. End users are adopting OBPs as an effective way to offer to the customers' environmentally responsible packaging in addressing concerns of government and the consuming public regarding the environmentally acceptable disposal of single use plastic products

Meanwhile the green bag can last for approximately two years or more than 100 grocery trips. It is made of material that is recyclable, non-toxic, and allergy free.

We would like to amend SMC for this laudable effort. At the proper time allow me to pass a resolution commending SM's effort in protecting our environment.

Thank you, Madam President.

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City Councilor

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