

Published: Sep 02, 2009 02:00 AM

Modified: Aug 31, 2009 08:11 PM



Plastic banned in landfills

BY RAY MARTIN, Staff Writer

A North Carolina law will ban some plastic from landfills starting Oct. 1, a change that Raleigh officials say will help protect the environment and create recycling jobs statewide.

The law will ban two types of plastic from local landfills and transfer centers: PET plastic, which is used to make soda bottles, and HDPE plastic, which is used to make milk jugs, detergent containers and shampoo bottles.

It will be difficult for state inspectors to enforce the law. But Scott Mouw, the state recycling director, said the law's purpose is to spur recycling behavior and habits rather than to punish individuals who throw away plastic. "We aren't going to be looking in anyone's garbage cans," he said.

Mouw said inspectors will check for plastic in landfills and transfer centers. They likely will issue warnings for first-time offenses. Corrective action and fines could follow if they continue to find plastic.

Those are mild repercussions compared to Wake County's punishment for throwing away cardboard.

When the county banned cardboard in the mid-1990s, it was successful thanks to tipping fee increases placed on carriers, said Linda Leighton, a waste reduction specialist with the City of Raleigh.

But finding plastic, she said, will be more difficult.

"We want to use this as an education tool that hopefully carriers will take to their customers," she said.