

Ten Reasons to Avoid Foam Products

Note: Styrofoam® is a trademark of the Dow Chemical Company for a thermal insulation product used in the construction industry. Although the term is widely used to refer to generic foam products, the more accurate term to use is “expanded polystyrene” or EPS.

1. EPS foam doesn't breakdown in landfills. The plastics industry does not provide longevity data for EPS foam, but estimates range from hundreds to thousands of years.
2. EPS foam weighs very little (it contains as much as 90% air) but is extremely bulky. Our dwindling Pioneer Valley landfills will last longer without it.
3. Recycling of food-related EPS foam items is not environmentally or economically practical; it requires more energy and water and generates more climate-changing greenhouse gases than producing it in the first place.
4. EPS foam is profitable for companies that produce it, but those companies take little (if any) responsibility for its disposal or recycling.
5. Styrene, a key component in the manufacture of EPS foam, was recently added to U.S. Dept of Health & Human Services' National Toxicology Program's Report on Carcinogens (Twelfth Edition, 2011).
6. Styrene residues are found in 100% of human fat tissue samples. It enters our bodies through the air (via cigarette smoke, and during manufacture, use, or incineration) and food (present in agricultural foods and may leach from cups/plates).
7. The manufacturing process of styrene products is unhealthy for workers. They are exposed to many harmful chemicals and experience increased cancer rates, high rates of neurotoxicological effects (balance, hearing, and concentration), skin, eye & respiratory tract irritation, depression, headaches and fatigue.
8. EPS foam is the second most abundant form of beach trash and is harmful for marine life.
9. Like most plastics, EPS foam is made from petroleum, a non-renewable resource that reinforces U.S. dependence on oil-rich countries.
10. Dozens of communities in the United States have banned EPS foam food service disposables, including Nantucket, Brookline, Great Barrington, Somerville, New York City, Albany, Portland, Seattle, and over 60 Californian municipalities.

