

ASIA-PACIFIC NEWS

Plastic bag tax leads to 85-per-cent drop in use in Hong Kong

By DPA

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Hong Kong - Plastic bag use in Hong Kong has dropped by 85 per cent in the first two days since the introduction of a 6-US-cents tax on every bag, a survey released Thursday showed.

The number of plastic bags handed out in 18 supermarkets during a peak shopping hour before and after the introduction of the ban fell from 2,742 to 403, the environmental group Greeners Action said.

At the same time, the group said, the number of people who used their own bags or did not ask for plastic bags at checkout stands at the surveyed supermarkets grew by 56 per cent.

A tax of 50 Hong Kong cents has been levied since Tuesday in about 2,000 shops, including every major supermarket, in the high-rise city of 7 million people.

Before the tax, Hong Kong people were using an average of about 1,200 plastic bags each a year, or about three plastic bags a day per person.

About 30 million plastic bags a day are thrown away in the city, accounting for about 6 per cent of the 17,500 tons of rubbish sent to landfill sites every day.

Previous voluntary attempts to introduce charges on plastic bags in supermarkets had flopped with one chain dropping a pilot scheme because of fierce opposition from customers.

Unveiling the results of its study Thursday, Greeners Action said the tax might have to be increased when the economy rebounds if it is to remain effective.

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