

EPD responds to concerns about materials used in designated bags for MSW charging and explains the harm of degradable plastics

â€‹In response to recent media reports and online discussions concerning the material of designated bags for municipal solid waste (MSW) charging, the Environmental Protection Department (EPD) has made the following response:

All plastics claimed to be "degradable" require specific environments and temperatures to be completely degraded, such as exposure to ultraviolet light or high temperature. However, these conditions are absent in the anaerobic environment of the landfills in Hong Kong and therefore it takes a long time for plastics to decompose in the landfills.

Some "degradable" plastics, particularly oxo-degradable plastics, will fragment into microplastics when they break down in natural environment such as the ocean, which exacerbates the harmfulness to the natural environment and hinders recycling. In fact they are less environmental-friendly. The use of oxo-degradable plastics has been banned in places like the European Union. In Hong Kong, the manufacturing and sale of oxo-degradable plastic products will also be banned starting from April 22 this year.

When selecting the material for the designated bags for MSW charging, taking into consideration the durability of the bags and the principle of environmental protection, the EPD has required the use of at least 20 per cent recycled plastic in the designated bags in order to reduce the use of raw plastic.