

New Phosphate Limits for Automatic Dishwashing Detergents

2009 Oregon Legislature Reduces Allowable Limits

This fact sheet provides information regarding SB 631, passed by the 2009 Oregon legislature, that limits phosphorus levels in automatic dishwasher detergents. Restaurants, hospitals and other businesses and institutions that use commercial dishwashers are not subject to the law change, but are encouraged to use low phosphate detergents whenever possible.

In 1992, the Oregon Legislature adopted phosphorus limits for cleaning agents including soaps, detergents and automatic dishwasher detergents. The 2009 requirements relate to automatic dishwasher detergents only and reduce the limit from 8.7% to 0.5%. SB 631 is available for review at:

http://www.leg.state.or.us/09reg/measpdf/sb0600_dir/sb0631.en.pdf

Why the limit is needed

When phosphorus gets into rivers and especially lakes, it acts as a fertilizer for algae and aquatic weed growth. Excess algae can deplete the oxygen supply necessary for healthy fish and aquatic life. In some cases, excess phosphorous can lead to blooms of blue-green algae that can be harmful for people and pets.

Excess aquatic weed growth can affect swimming and boating. While other nutrients are needed for algae to grow, phosphorous is the easiest nutrient to control. The reduction of phosphorus discharge to the sewer system also reduces the expense of phosphorus removal by wastewater treatment facilities.



Algae blooms may cover the surface of the water, making it unsuitable for boating and swimming.

What does the law require?

Effective July 1, 2010, retailers and distributors may not sell or distribute in Oregon, any dishwashing detergent with more than 0.5 percent phosphorus by weight, with the **following exception:**

Detergents used in automatic commercial dishwashers may contain up to 8.7 percent phosphorus.

All cleaning agents sold in Oregon must be labeled with the percent of phosphorus by weight, including the equivalency of phosphorus per recommended use level.

For more information, please contact:
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Alternative formats

Alternative formats (Braille, large type) of this document can be made available. Contact DEQ's Office of Communications & Outreach, Portland, at (503) 229-5696, or toll-free in Oregon at 1-800-452-4011, ext. 5696.



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