

Frequently Asked Questions

The NYS Returnable Container Act (i.e. the Bigger, Better, Bottle Bill—Now Law as of 10/31/09)

Good Information Links:

- <http://www.dec.ny.gov/chemical/8833.html>
- <http://www.dec.ny.gov/chemical/8500.html>

The NYS Returnable Container Act expands the state’s existing carbonated (soda/beer) container redemption law by adding bottled water to the list of taxed/redeemable containers. There are a number of nuances still unfolding as we speak, mostly regarding the logistics as to how the program will unfold from a distributor/retailer perspective. But the current guidance from our friends at the Oneida-Herkimer Solid Waste Authority, and based upon what’s currently being done at one of our local establishments, here are some answers/pictures that might be worthwhile for our community to consider...

What container types (as a result of both the old and new law) have the \$0.05 redeemable deposit in NYS?

Traditional carbonated soda/beer containers, as well as water and flavored water, for example:



What container types do not have the \$0.05 redeemable deposit in NYS?

Non-carbonated juices and sports drinks (even if they’re low/no sugar), as follows:



Is there a container size/volume threshold?

Yes... Containers equal to or greater than 1 gallon in volume will not have a \$0.05 redeemable deposit, such as these (1 gallon in size):



Is there a specific labeling requirement on containers which will indicate whether or not it's covered by the expanded law?

In the long run, yes. Currently, this is up to the distributor and/or retail establishment. Some container types right now have the current label (left picture), while some don't (right picture). Nonetheless, even with the picture on the right, the retail establishment is still charging/redeeming the \$0.05 deposit. Within the next 3 months, it is assumed that all included containers will have the correct labeling.

This container says
ME, CT, NY \$0.05



This container says MI-ME-OR \$0.05



How will the community be able to redeem water bottles expanded under the new law?

Certainly the establishment that sells the container and charges the \$0.05 deposit must redeem it to the consumer (up to 240 containers at one time per day). But for the typical consumer who redeems carbonated soda/beer or bottled water at establishments like Walmart or Hannaford's through TOMRA reverse vending machines, the guidance is that eventually these devices will be engineered to accept all redeemable containers. But by law, establishments only have to redeem deposits for the container types they sell. Common practice at the typical Walmart/Hannaford's in NYS today is that they accept "most" redeemable carbonated containers, even those they don't sell. In the long run, this might also be the case with water bottles. But it's just going to take some time for this to all pan out specifically relative to the TOMRA machines. In the meantime, the establishments themselves should be able to tell consumers what their practices/policies are.

What change in college policy regarding the collection of redeemable water bottles will be forthcoming?

For the moment, students or employees who generate water bottles included in the expanded NYS law should collect/segregate such containers into the orange-labeled nickel deposit receptacles located at recycling/waste segregation stations across campus.

