

China Standard GB/T 21661-2020 Plastic Shopping Bags has been Effective as of 31 Dec. 2020, and Replaces 2008 Version

As the "Opinions regarding further reinforcing plastic pollution governance" is implemented across China, the management on non-degradable plastic bags is reinforced, major cities in China are starting prohibiting non-degradable plastic bags. However, this policy does not prohibit non-degradable plastic bags in China, common plastic bags are still allowed in smaller cities, towns and rural areas for a longer transition period. Therefore, Chinese state administration of market regulation (Standardization administration) announce updated product standard for plastic bags on 9 November 2020, which was implemented since 31 December 2020. In comparison with the previous 2008 version, the new version removes degradable and starch-based plastic shopping bags from the scope, while those 2 types of products are individually managed by other standards (refer to GB/T 38082-019, GB/T 38079-2019).

The 2020 version increases film minimal thickness, and prohibits components that are easily discarded, such as detachable hanging loops. Additionally plastic bags shall clarify whether are for food contact or not, and with other labeling requirements. In general, this standard enhances safety and environmental requirements, facilitates reuse and appropriate handling of plastic bags by consumers. Please see below for a brief comparison between the two versions.

Section	GB/T 21661-2020	GB/T 21661-2008
1 Scope	<p>This standard applies to non-degradable plastic shopping bags made from films of traditional resin, been processed by heat sealing or bonding, also applies to non-degradable plastic shopping bags made of plastic that composited with other materials.</p> <p>This standard does not apply to plastic bags for only packaging but not for carrying, such as roll-linkage bags (tear-off bags or perforated bags).</p> <p>This standard does not apply to starch-based and biodegradable plastic shopping bags.</p>	<p>This standard applies to plastic shopping bags primarily made from resin films, been processed by heat sealing or bonding, also applies to plastic shopping bags made from plastic that composited with other materials.</p> <p>This standard also applies to plastic shopping bags made of plastic that composited with other materials.</p> <p>This standard does not apply to plastic bags for only packaging but not for carrying, such as roll-linkage bags (tear-off bags or perforated bags).</p>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Clarified for non-degradable plastic shopping bags only, and not applies to starch-based (ref. to GB/T 38079-2019) and biodegradable (ref. to GB/T 38082-2019) plastic shopping bags 	/
2 Normative references	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Deleted some normative references, such as GB/T 5009.60, GB/T 5009.67, GB/T 5009.156-2003, GB/T 20197-2006, GB 21660. Added new normative references, including GB/T 1844.1, GB/T 1844.2, GB/T 1844.3, GB/T 16228, GB 38507. The 2020 version mostly quotes to undated references, so the latest version shall apply. Except GB/T 2828.1-2012, GB/T 9639.1-2008. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Most normative references are dated references.
3 Terms and definitions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Revised definition of plastic shopping bags in accordance with scope, but has no substantial change. Added new definitions of plastic shopping bags used for food contact, plastic shopping bags not used for food contact. Deleted definitions of degradable plastic shopping bags, starch-based plastic shopping bags. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provided definitions of plastic shopping bags, degradable plastic shopping bags, starch-based plastic shopping bags
4 Classification	<p>Plastic shopping bags are classified depending on contact with food or not, can be classified as plastic shopping bags used for food contact, and plastic shopping bags not used for food contact.</p>	/
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Added product category that been classified depending on contact with food or not. 	/
5 Requirements		
5.1 labelling requirements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Deleted reference to GB 21660-2008. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Labelling of Plastic shopping bags shall meet requirements according to GB 21660.
5.1.1 Plastic shopping bags not used for food contact	<p>Plastic shopping bags not used for food contact purposes shall clearly be labeled with product name, standard No., specifications, claimed weight loading, materials and constituents, environmental statement and safety statement, see GB/T 21661-2020 appendix A for detailed requirements.</p>	/
5.1.2 Plastic shopping bags used for food contact	<p>Plastic shopping bags used for food contact shall clearly label "Plastic shopping bags used for direct food contact", product name, standard No., specifications, claimed weight loading, materials and constituents, manufacturer, environmental statement and safety statement, see GB/T 21661-2020 appendix A for detailed requirements.</p>	/

Section	GB/T 21661-2020	GB/T 21661-2008
5.1.3 Environmental statements	Plastic shopping bags shall have environmental statement, such as <i>"Please reuse in order to protect environment and save resources"</i> ; <i>"Reduce plastic pollution is everybody responsibility"</i> , etc.	/
5.1.4 Safety statements	Plastic shopping bags shall have warning and safety statement, such as <i>"keep away from child in order to avoid and prevent suffocation risks"</i> , etc.	/
5.2 Environmental requirements	Plastic shopping bags shall have nominal thickness no less than 0.030mm , minimum thickness no less than 0.025mm . Plastic shopping bags shall have no attachment that does not belong to part of the bag, such as hanging components.	/
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increases minimum thickness, and prohibits additional disposable attachment that is not part of the bag. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Thickness requirements provided under section 4.2 size deviation, minimum thickness shall not less than 0.025mm. Has no requirements about attachment.
5.3 Size deviation requirements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Deleted thickness deviation requirements for bags less than 0.030mm. The rest deviation requirements on thickness, width, length remain same. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provided deviation requirements on thickness, width, length in section 4.2.
5.4 Sensory requirements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provides requirements on colour, odour, appearance, and printing quality. Added instruction on colour of plastic shopping bags that are not used for food contact can be defined by the trade agreements. Redefines printing ink fastness requirements, categorized based on non-water based and water based types, both shall not be less than 20%. And added water resistance requirements for water based type printing. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provided requirements on colour, odour, appearance, printing quality in section 4.3.
5.5 Physical and mechanical property requirements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provides requirements on loaded lifting, dropping, leakage, sealing strength, and free-falling dart impact in section 5.5, which have same requirements with 2008 version. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provided requirements on loaded lifting, dropping, leakage, sealing strength, and free-falling dart impact in section 4.4.
/	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Deleted requirements on starch content, degradability, safety and hygiene. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provided requirements on starch content, degradability, safety and hygiene in sections 4.5 to 4.7
6 Test methods		
6.1 Sampling	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Revised sampling method, requires removing samples at upper and lower surfaces of the whole stack of plastic bags before taking samples. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Take enough samples for testing in section 5.1.
6.2 Sample conditioning and testing environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sample conditioning and testing environment referred to GB/T 2918 with no significant changes from 2008 version. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sample conditioning and testing environment referred to GB/T 2918-1998 in section 5.2.
6.3 Thickness deviation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provides test method for thickness deviation with no significant changes from 2008 version. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provided test method for thickness deviation in section 5.3.
6.4 Width and length deviation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provides test method for width and length deviation with no significant changes from 2008 version. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provided test method for width and length deviation in section 5.4.
6.5 Sensory appearance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provides test method for colour and appearance, odour, and printing quality Added test method for printing performance and water resistance for water-based printing ink. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provided test method for colour and appearance, odour, and printing quality in section 5.5.

Section	GB/T 21661-2020	GB/T 21661-2008
6.6 Physical and mechanical property	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Revised test method for loaded lifting, requests that volume of filling material shall not exceed 2/3 of bag's effective volume. Revised test method for loaded dropping, requests that volume of filling material shall not exceed 2/3 of bag's effective volume, and degassing before testing. And exempted partially heat sealed bags that designated for special function. Revised test method for leakage, tested by 500ml clear water, and exempted bags that designated for special function (such as perforated bags). Revised test method for sealing strength, referred to QB/T 2358 for test, also added that result shall take average value from 3 samples. Revised test method for free-falling dart impact that shall refer to method A of GB/T 9639.1-2008, and the weight of free-falling dart is determined by bag film thickness. Deleted test method for starch content, degradability, safety and hygiene. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provided test method for loaded lifting, dropping, leakage, sealing strength, and free-falling dart impact in section 5.6. Provided test method for starch content, degradability, safety and hygiene.
7 Inspection rules	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Revised test scheme, sampling plan, decision rules. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provided inspection rules.
8 Packaging, packaging symbols, transportation, storage.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Revised packaging symbols that need to be labelled based on contact with food or not. Plastic shopping bags used for food contact shall be clearly labelled, and indicate material, shelf life, etc. Redefines transportation requirements. Deleted maximum 1 year storage period. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provided packaging, packaging symbols, transportation, storage.
Appendix A (normative) labelling requirements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provides ways to present labelling elements, and requirements regarding specification, executed standard, labeled position, symbols, etc. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Appendix A originally as determination of starch content in starch-based plastic shopping bags.
Appendix B (normative) Specific content of symbols	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provides specific meaning of symbols, codes, and ways to label statements and constituents. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Appendix B originally as determination of evaporation residue in starch-based plastic shopping bags.

How Does this Impact You? Contact Us to Discuss

Any comments and/or questions please contact your local customer service representative or email to: info@us.bureauveritas.com.

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