



PLASTIC POLLUTION

AGENDA REPORT ON THE ANALYSIS & RECOMMENDATION ON
THE REGULATION OF LIGHTER THAN AIR BALLOONS

PRESENTED BY: COMMISSIONERS HONSBERGER, BISCONER, AND CRAMER



ALTHOUGH BALLOONS APPEAR TO FLOAT OFF INTO SPACE THEY ALWAYS COME BACK DOWN

THE PROBLEM:

LIGHTER THAN
AIR BALLOONS
POSE SAFETY
THREATS TO
ANIMALS,
HUMANS, AND
THE
ENVIRONMENT.

Balloon litter is found at our parks, beaches, oceans, and neighborhoods.

Balloons decompose into micro-plastics.

Animals ingest balloons & become entangled in their ribbons.

Mylar balloons cause power outages and fires.

Helium is a finite resource.



RECOMMENDATION

Adopt a resolution that bans the sale, use, and release of all “lighter than air” (helium) balloons in the city of Encinitas.



Balloons, like these found this week in Encinitas, are seen as a threat to marine life. Photo by



BALLOON LITTER

- Lighter than air balloons are found decomposing at our parks, beaches, oceans, and neighborhoods.
- Latex and Mylar balloons are the most common form of floating garbage within 200 miles of our shorelines.
- Surfrider volunteers recovered 1,375 balloons from local beaches in 2019 and data shows that number of balloons and balloon pieces found on beaches has tripled in the past 10 years.
- Balloon debris has also been found to have a negative economic impact. Dirty beaches and parks can drive away tourists and require additional city funds to keep them clean.



MICROPLASTICS

- The release of both Mylar and latex balloons results in plastic pollution on land and in our oceans and waterways.
- The deteriorating balloons become microplastic pollution (plastic pieces less than 5 mm) that is found in our oceans, drinking water, food, and even the air we breathe.
- Microplastics are a significant environmental challenge which negatively impact the safety of our citizens, wildlife, oceans, coastlines, and communities.

BALLOONS KILL ANIMALS

- Balloons can persist in environments for years or centuries and once they are in the ocean or on land they are mistaken as food by many species.
- When ingested, the balloon will block the animal's digestive tract, preventing it from absorbing nutrients and causing the animal to slowly starve.
- Balloon strings and ribbons are also deadly. Animals can become entangled and injured, impacting their ability to move or eat.



HAZARDS OF MYLAR BALLOON

- In the last 5 years helium filled Mylar balloons have caused more than 500 power outages across San Diego
- Mylar balloons have a metallic coating that conducts electricity and can interrupt electric service and start fires when it contacts high-voltage power lines.

HELIUM IS A FINITE RESOURCE

- Helium is the most common gas used in balloons and it is predicted to run out in 25 years.
- This is a concern because helium is used in MRI machines, the production of computer chips, and fiber optics.



RETAILERS & ALTERNATIVES

- Eight retailers in Encinitas sell lighter than air filled balloons and “air-only” balloons.
- Data from 3 stores suggest that lighter than air balloons sales range from 20% to 1% of the stores’ overall sales.
- With the recent helium shortage, artists and designers have been creating air-only filled balloon designs that include arches, bouquets, and hanging arrangements.
- Increased sales of these air-only filled balloon designs can off-set the loss of revenue from lighter than air balloon sales and provide the public with viable alternatives.

LIGHTER THAN AIR BALLOON ORDINANCES IN THE US



Table 2. Cities with Lighter than Air Balloon Ordinances

Location	Description	Municipal Code or News Article
1. Glendale, CA	Banned the sale and distribution of Mylar balloons	https://qcode.us/codes/glendale/
2. Hermosa Beach, CA	Banned the release of all lighter than air balloons and the sale of mylar balloons.	http://www.codepublishing.com/CA/HermosaBeach/#!/HermosaBeach08/HermosaBeach0864.html#8.64.060
3A. Malibu, CA	Voted to ban the sale of all balloons (Oct. 8, 2018).	https://www.californiacitynews.org/2018/10/malibu-council-votes-ban-balloons.html
3B. California	Bans the release of all Mylar balloons	https://codes.findlaw.com/ca/penal-code/pen-sect-653-1.html
4A. Provincetown, MA	Banned the sale, use, and release of all lighter than air balloons.	http://www.provincetown-ma.gov/DocumentCenter/View/323/General-Bylaw-Ch-13?bidId=
4B. Nantucket, MA	Banned the sale, use, and release of all lighter than air balloons.	https://ecode360.com/30483231
5. Suffolk County, NY	Banned the release of all lighter than air balloons.	https://ecode360.com/14944310
6. New Shoreham, RI	Banned the sale, use, and release of all balloons.	https://clerkshq.com/newshoreham-ri
7. Massachusetts Maryland	Working on balloon bans	https://www.usnews.com/news/the-report/articles/2020-02-28/balloon-bans-take-flight-across-the-country



LET'S BE THE LEADER IN SD COUNTY

- Glendale, Malibu, and Hermosa Beach have all adopted bans on lighter than air balloons as have many other cities and states across the country.
- Plastics will continue to be part of our environment in the near-term, despite waste reduction efforts, but the most effective way to reduce balloon debris is to ***adopt a resolution that bans the sale, use, and release of all lighter than air balloons in the city of Encinitas.***

FOOTNOTES FROM THE AGENDA REPORT AND DRAFT RESOLUTION

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2. Duncan, Debra. "Balloons: Balloons Pose a Risk to Wildlife and the Environment." *Environmental Nature Center*, ENC, 2016, encenter.org/visit-us/programs/birthday-parties/balloons. <https://encenter.org/visit-us/programs/birthday-parties/balloons/>
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4. Balloons Blow. 2021. *Impacts on Wildlife & the Environment - Balloons Blow.* [online] Available at: <<https://balloonsblow.org/impacts-on-wildlife-and-environment/>> [Accessed 31 January 2021]. <https://balloonsblow.org/impacts-on-wildlife-and-environment/>
5. NOAA Fisheries. 2018. *FishNews – June 13, 2018.* [online] Available at: <<https://content.govdelivery.com/accounts/USNOAAFISHERIES/bulletins/1f72ca0>> [Accessed 31 January 2021]. <https://content.govdelivery.com/accounts/USNOAAFISHERIES/bulletins/1f72ca0>
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8. Gibson, K., 2020. *Mylar balloons are fun! They're also a dangerous menace.* [online] [Cbsnews.com](https://www.cbsnews.com/news/mylar-balloons-and-power-lines-a-potentially-explosive-mix/). Available at: <<https://www.cbsnews.com/news/mylar-balloons-and-power-lines-a-potentially-explosive-mix/#:~:text=They're%20also%20a%20dangerous%20menace,-By%20Kate%20Gibson&text=Beyond%20disrupting%20electric%20service%2C%20mylar,weeks%20and%20float%20for%20miles.>> [Accessed 31 January 2021]. <https://www.cbsnews.com/news/mylar-balloons-and-power-lines-a-potentially-explosive-mix/#:~:text=They're%20also%20a%20dangerous%20menace,-By%20Kate%20Gibson&text=Beyond%20disrupting%20electric%20service%2C%20mylar,weeks%20and%20float%20for%20miles.>
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THE SOLUTION - PLEASE VOTE YES!

Fellow Commissioners, please approve a Recommendation from the Environmental Commission to the City Council to:

1. Adopt a resolution and ordinance that bans the sale, use, and release of all lighter than air balloons in the city of Encinitas. This ban would not apply to scientific balloons released by the state or federal governments and/or hot air balloons.

QUESTIONS AND DISCUSSION