

## Bottle Bill Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

Connecticut is one of 10 states in the U.S. that are "bottle bill" states. Bottle bill programs, also known as container redemption programs, may have slightly different provisions in each state, but they work by charging a deposit on a container at the time of purchase which is then returned to the consumer when the empty bottle is returned. What follows are some of the more common questions and answers regarding this program and the recent changes to Connecticut's bottle bill which expands this program.

Click on the question below to see the answer:

- [What can I do when a store associate tells me they cannot take back a return when the reverse vending machine is not working but the store is open?](#)
- [I have a large odd-shaped empty juice bottle that doesn't look like it fits in the reverse vending machine, what can I do with it?](#)
- [Why was I charged a bottle deposit fee on a plastic bottle of juice I purchased even though there was no deposit amount shown on the label?](#)
- [I purchased a beverage in January of 2024, and it doesn't show 10 cents on the label but that's what I was charged. Is this right?](#)
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- [Can redemption centers turn away my beverage containers if they are marked with the CT 10 or CTRV?](#)
- [When I purchase a mini or nip bottle \(miniature bottle of alcohol\), I pay a 5-cent fee. Can I collect that fee back?](#)
- [Can I redeem beverage containers from another state to a CT retailer or redemption center?](#)

**What can I do when a store associate tells me they cannot take back a return when the reverse vending machine is not working but the store is open?**

By Connecticut State law, the retailer shall not refuse to accept any empty beverage containers of the kind, size and brand sold by the dealer, or refuse to pay to such person the refund value of a beverage container.

**I have a large odd-shaped empty juice bottle that doesn't look like it fits in the reverse vending machine, what can I do with it?**

If the container size falls within the size limits under the bottle deposit program, these odd-shaped juice bottles do fit in the RVM. All glass, metal and plastic containers that contain 150ml to 3 liters of a carbonated beverage and 150ml to 2.5 liters of a non-carbonated beverage are covered under the bottle deposit program. Sometimes the larger squared containers need repositioning in the RVM to read the bar code. If you are still having problems with the RVM reading the beverage container, you can bring it to the customer service desk for a refund. Let the manager know about the RVM problem so it can get solved for the next time.

**Why was I charged a bottle deposit fee on a plastic bottle of juice I purchased even though there was no deposit amount shown on the label?**

Under a law passed in 2023, beverage manufacturers were given the opportunity to sell the remaining unlabeled beverages that were in their inventory. However, the lack of labelling doesn't mean this product is not covered by the Bottle Bill Law.

**I purchased a beverage in January of 2024, and it doesn't show 10 cents on the label but that's what I was charged. Is this right?**

Yes, manufacturers are allowed to sell remaining beverages with the old 5 cent labels that are in the distributor or dealer's inventory. You may see the old labels for a period of time, but you will be charged the increased amount of 10 cents for the deposit and receive the 10 cents in return regardless of labels after January 1, 2024.

**Why do some hard seltzers have a deposit fee and others don't?**

Hard seltzers were added to the list of covered beverage containers in 2023, but clarifying language was added to the law that excludes any spirit or wine-based beverages. Only malt-based hard seltzers are subject to the bottle deposit.

**Is a gallon plastic jug of water included in the bottle deposit program?**

No, the container size limit for a noncarbonated beverage is 2.5 liters or less. For carbonated beverages such as soda, the container size limit is 3 liters. Beverage containers less than 150 milliliters containing carbonated or noncarbonated beverages are not included in the bottle deposit program. Miniature bottles of alcohol are charged a 10-cent fee at the point of sale, but are not included in the program and are therefore not redeemable.

**When was this law enacted and how does it work in Connecticut?**

The law was enacted in 1978 and became effective January 1, 1980. During the months from November 2008 through February, 2009, the CT General Assembly passed a series of three new state laws that changed and expanded the state's Bottle Bill, as well as required that unredeemed beverage container deposit funds revert (or "escheat") to the State of Connecticut. Beginning January 1, 2023, the most recent statutory changes to the Bottle Bill, [Public Act 21-58](#), expanded the list of covered beverages. The changes are summarized in the List of Covered Beverages.

Please review the summary to understand the totality of these changes.

The deposit system works as follows:

- The bottle bill applies to the following beverages:

- Carbonated Beverages such as beer or other malt beverages, hard seltzer, hard cider and mineral waters, soda water and similar carbonated soft drinks;
- Noncarbonated beverages such as any water (including flavored water), plant or nutritionally enhanced water, juice, juice drinks, tea, coffee, kombucha, plant infused drink, sports or energy drink and any beverage that is identified as such through the use of letters, words or symbols on such beverage's product label.
- Each retailer pays the beverage container distributor 10-cents for each beverage container delivered.
- The consumer, in-turn, pays the retailer 10-cents for each beverage container he or she purchases from the retailer.
- The retailer or redemption center pays the consumer 10-cents for each container returned by the consumer.
- The distributor then reimburses the retailer or redemption center 10-cents for each beer, carbonated soft drink and noncarbonated beverage container plus a handling fee of;
  - 2.5 cents for each beer, hard cider or other malt beverage container and;
  - 3.5 cents for each carbonated soft drink and noncarbonated beverage container returned.
- The distributor pays the State of Connecticut 10-cents for each unclaimed deposit. The new law allows for distributor or deposit initiators to keep a percentage of the unclaimed deposits beginning FY 2023.

**Do all stores that sell carbonated and noncarbonated beverages have to take back all containers?**

No. Stores are only required to take back the brands that they carry. If they sell a particular brand of soda, beer, water, etc., they must take those containers back. They are not required to take containers that they do not stock.

**Does it matter if the containers are crushed or flattened?**

No. The store must still accept the containers as long as the deposit information listing our state and the refund amount is visible. However, stores are not required to accept bottles that contain any foreign objects like cigarette butts.

**Can stores limit the hours during which they will take returns?**

No. They must have the same hours for container returns that they have for operating hours.

### **Who gets the money from bottles that are not returned?**

Called unclaimed deposits, or escheats, these monies accumulate from containers that are either thrown away or recycled through curbside programs. These funds are paid to the State of Connecticut, with a portion returned back to the distributor or deposit initiator beginning in FY 2023.

### **What is a Redemption Center and how do I get a statewide listing of these centers?**

These centers accept returns from the public and issue refunds. Review the list of [Redemption Centers](#) to find the center closest to you. Note that individual redemption centers can determine what kind, size and brand of beverage containers will be accepted at their facility.

### **What do I need to do if I want to open a Redemption Center myself?**

Complete and submit a Beverage Container Redemption Center Registration form [Redemption Center Registration](#) to the address indicated on the form.

Effective immediately, all Redemption Center Registration Forms shall be submitted for review by email to [Laura Pointek's email](#).

### **Is anyone eligible for an exemption from the law?**

Yes. Any manufacturer who bottles and sells less than 250,000 noncarbonated beverage containers that are 20 ounces or less in size during a calendar year or one hundred thousand gallons or less of juice in beverage containers each calendar year may seek an exemption from the law by filing a form and affidavit with the Commissioner of Energy and Environmental Protection no later than November 1st of each year. The form must be completed with the **actual number** of containers bottled and sold for the first three quarters of the year and with an estimated number of containers bottled and sold for the final quarter. This form can be found on DEEP's "[The Connecticut Bottle Bill](#)" webpage. Otherwise, if a business sells carbonated or noncarbonated beverages, which are not specifically exempt by law, that business must charge the 10-cent deposit and must provide refunds for returns of those brands that they sell. The law defines "manufacturer" as either: 1) every person bottling, canning or otherwise filling beverage containers for sale to distributors or dealers, or 2) in the case of a private label brand, the owner of the private label trademark.

**Are any types of beverage containers exempt from the law (specifically listed as not requiring a refund value)?**

The law exempts three categories of beverage containers: 1) any beverage container larger than 3 liters containing a carbonated beverage, 2) larger than 2.5 liters for noncarbonated beverages and 3) any beverage container offered for sale for consumption on interstate passenger carriers. In addition, see information in previous question regarding manufacturer eligibility for exemption. For guidance on container types that will continue to not be covered by the deposit program please review the summarized changes in the [Updated List of Covered Beverages as of July 1, 2025](#).

**Which states also have "bottle bills"?**

The ten deposit states are California, Connecticut, Hawaii, Iowa, Maine, Massachusetts, Michigan, New York, Oregon and Vermont.

**How is a bottle bill different from a curbside recycling program?**

The bottle bill puts a cash value on each container which makes it more likely that these containers will be recycled. States with bottle bills have much higher recycling rates for containers than non-bottle bill states. Furthermore, the bottle bill was originally conceived as a litter prevention measure, as giving the containers a value means that containers that are left in public outdoor spaces are often picked up by people who collect them for their refund value. Note that containers marked for deposit can still be placed in your curbside recycling bin, however you will not receive a refund for doing so.

**If we have curbside recycling, what purpose does the bottle bill serve?**

States with bottle bills have a higher recycling rate for beverage containers. Because the material is collected separately from other materials (especially other plastics), the material tends to be less contaminated and thus is of a higher quality than material collected curbside. Also, because the material has a cash value, people are less likely to litter the containers and even if they do end up as litter, someone is more likely to pick the material up. This is especially helpful toward reducing litter at public outdoor spaces which may have inadequate recycling opportunities.

**Who must open special account for managing the flow of money in the Bottle Bill?**

The "deposit initiator" for every beverage container sold in Connecticut that is subject to the bottle bill must open an account. A deposit initiator is the first distributor, dealer, or agent to collect the deposit on a beverage container sold to any person within Connecticut. Deposit initiators must register online with the Connecticut Department of

Revenue Service ([DRS](#)) and establish a special account depositing the amount equal to the refund value for each beverage container sold by such initiator.

Refer to the [DRS website](#) for more information on deposit initiator special accounts and reporting.

For more information about accounting and reporting, contact the [Connecticut Department of Revenue Services](#) at 860-297-5962.

For general questions, complaints regarding non-compliance, or for information concerning redemption center registration, please contact [Laura.Pointek@ct.gov](mailto:Laura.Pointek@ct.gov).

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**Is there a national organization that tracks bottle bill issues?**

Yes, the Container Recycling Institute, 4361 Keystone Ave., Culver City, CA 90232.

Phone: 310-559-7451 | Website: [www.container-recycling.org](http://www.container-recycling.org) and [Bottlebill.org](http://Bottlebill.org).

**Can redemption centers turn away my beverage containers if they are marked with the CT 10 or CTRV?**

Yes, redemption centers are private businesses and will only accept redeemable beverage containers they are reimbursed for by a distributor. Some containers such as those that are from craft brewers, breweries or other specialty retailers or vendors can only be refunded at the place where purchased. Per CT State law, dealers or person who engages in the sale of the beverage are required to take back the brands that they carry. If a brewery or specialty vendor/retailer sells a particular brand, kind and size of soda, beer, water, etc., they must redeem those containers.

**When I purchase a mini or nip bottle (miniature bottle of alcohol), I pay a 5-cent fee. Can I collect that fee back?**

No. The fee is **NOT** part of the State's bottle deposit program, it is a fee that is collected by the liquor wholesaler. As of October 1, 2021, consumers pay a **FEE** or surcharge of 5 cents on miniature alcohol bottles. Miniatures are any beverage container of fifty milliliters or less containing a spirit or liquor.

Fees collected are sent to the municipality where the surcharge was collected. Per Connecticut state statutes, municipalities are supposed to use collected miniature fees to fund environmental measures to reduce the impact of litter.

Payments to Municipalities from Fees on Miniature Alcohol Bottles can be found on this page [Bottle Bill Stakeholder Process](#) Webpage.

For additional information, please see link to the DEEP News Release discussing surcharge on miniature alcohol bottles [DEEP DRS and DCP Remind of Surcharge on Miniature Alcohol Bottles Taking Effect Oct 1](#).

**Can I redeem beverage containers from another state to a CT retailer or redemption center?**

No, this is considered illegal. According to a law passed in 2024, "Returning empty beverage containers for refund that were not purchased in Connecticut or that were previously redeemed is illegal". See PA 24-2, [AN ACT CONCERNING THE REDEMPTION OF OUT-OF-STATE BEVERAGE CONTAINERS](#).