



## Convenience stores continue to add safety protocols, new pickup options

**Convenience retailers say that are continuing to enhance store operations to address new consumer preferences related to safety protocols and convenient shopping options that have emerged from the coronavirus pandemic.**

Nine in 10 stores (89%) have installed plexiglass barriers at checkout, and 87% provide hand sanitizer inside the store. Convenience stores sell an estimated 80% of the fuel purchased in the country, and 24% of stores are offering hand sanitizer at the fuel island, according to a national survey of U.S. convenience store owners conducted by NACS.

"Customers really appreciate observing our associates cleaning, continually wiping down high-touch points in the store and keeping our fuelling dispensers clean and in tip-top shape. I think the pandemic has really made it necessary for convenience stores to enhance a 'culture of cleanliness' throughout the property, both inside and at the pump," said Dennis McCartney, director of operations at Landhope Farms (Kennett Square, Pennsylvania). "This will continue to be an important issue and an important continuing aspect to our everyday business."

Retailers are also anticipating even more change. Rainbo Oil Co. (dba Kwik Stop) is focusing on safety and protecting employees by ensuring adequate supply of PPEs and disinfecting/cleaning supplies throughout the pandemic, according to Lori Thielen with the Dubuque, Iowa-based company.

### **New programs emphasize convenience**

Retailers recognize that as essential businesses, they play an important role in serving local communities. Overall, 98% of respondents say their stores have remained open: 64% of stores have kept the same hours, and 34% have stayed open but with reduced hours.

Many retailers also say they are driving forward new convenience offers that respond to customer demands, such as new payment options that have accelerated within the industry: 40% say they have introduced or increased contactless payment options inside stores, and 62% say fewer customers are paying by cash, reflecting a broader retail trend. In terms of product pickup, 33% of stores have introduced or expanded curbside pickup, 29% have increased a drive-thru element to their operations and 21% increased delivery.

Retailers say they are embracing these new conveniences. Marshall Dujka, owner of Timewise Food

Stores in Houston, Texas, says that he will continue to explore how to better anticipate new customer buying habits and behaviors.

Meanwhile, High's is expanding its frictionless payment program, as well as curbside pick-up and delivery options, according to Brad Chivington, senior vice president of the Baltimore, Maryland-based company.

### **Supporting communities**

In addition to serving customers, retailers are supporting their communities. Nearly two in three retailers (63%) say they are supporting medical/healthcare personnel, first responders or others affected by the crisis. Other companies are recognizing local heroes during the industry-wide [24/7 Day](#) (July 24) that honors first responders, medical personnel and American Red Cross volunteers.

"We're looking forward to bringing the community back together," said Edwin Piper, general manager at Willits General Store in Basalt, Colorado.