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NEWS-LEADER

Store goes extra mile to keep carts sanitized

Murfin's Market owner says device is more efficient than wipes.

TARA MUCK • NEWS-LEADER • AUGUST 25, 2009

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Ozark -- Chuck Murfin goes through cases of sanitizer wipes each week.

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While it's nice to know customers at Murfin's Market are conscious of germs and bacteria on the store's shopping carts, using the provided wipes only does so much to protect them and their precious cargo -- children.

Murfin, who owns the grocery store, pointed out that he spent a lot on the wipes, which aren't very environmentally friendly. They can last for decades in a landfill.

Add the possible spread of the H1N1 flu virus (swine flu), and it didn't take long for Murfin to decide more action was needed. He called the Springfield-based Enviren about a cart sanitizer machine.

When Murfin's Market began supplying the wipes seven years ago, the grocer was going through one case a month. Now they're going through cases a week, he said, costing about \$200 a month per store.

However, not everyone uses the wipes. And customers touch more than just the handrail. So do children.

"With little kids, you see them chewing on the handles or in the basket with their mouth on the side of the basket," Murfin said.

So when Enviren began to market its newest product -- a cart sanitizer machine that looks much like a mini-car wash -- Murfin jumped at the opportunity.

On Thursday, Murfin's Market in Ozark became the first store to offer an automated cart sanitizer station designed by Enviren.

Doug Feller, spokesman for Enviren, said the company began working on the product over a year ago and just recently began offering it to stores.

While the idea has been around for a few years, Enviren provided its own sanitizer solution for its machine.

Through a company in Massachusetts, they developed EnvirenMist, which kills about 70 different types viruses and bacteria, Feller said.

The EPA-approved solution is used in the cart wash, spraying a fine mist all over the cart and drying in less than a minute.

"On average, most shopping carts have about a million bacteria count because they haven't been cleaned," Feller said, citing University of Arizona scientist Dr. Charles Gerba, who is also doing tests for the company.



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Doug Feller, spokesman for Enviren, demonstrates the company's cart washer at Murfin's Market in Ozark Thursday. The store was the first to use the company's EPA-approved washer. (Tara Muck / News-Leader)



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A cart is pushed through a shopping cart washer at Murfin's Market in Ozark Thursday. Store owner Chuck Murfin said he plans to put the disinfecting machines in all four of his stores. (Tara Muck / News-Leader)

"With little kids, you see them chewing on the handles or in the basket with their mouth on the side of the basket."

-- Chuck Murfin, owner of Murfin's Market

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