



# CT Bottle Bill Redemption Reopening: Impacts and Learnings

# Background

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- On March 17<sup>th</sup> the CT DEEP announced it would be exercising “**enforcement discretion**” for **retailers offering container redemption services**
- DEEP stated the **discretion was being offered to allow flexibility to retailers who were finding it difficult to stock shelves** during increased consumer demand and implement enhanced cleaning measures while offering container redemption services.
- During DEEP’s suspension of enforcement of retailer redemption requirements **over 90% of beverage dealers (retailers) closed their bottle rooms** and stopped offering over the counter redemption services to the public.

- Consumers ability to redeem containers worth millions in deposits was severely limited



With 15 operational Redemption Centers left in the state, customers had barely any recourse to get their deposit money back for more than two months.

# Following the shutdown, food and beverage packaging industry associations expressed alarm at the drop-off in input material for essential goods



April 3, 2020

Commissioner Katie Dykes  
CT Department of Energy and Environmental Protection  
55 Elm Street  
Hartford, Connecticut 06106

**Re: Importance of Connecticut's Beverage Container Deposit Program to Essential Supply & Manufacturing Operations**

Dear Commissioner Dykes,

On behalf of our trade associations and member companies, we write to highlight the critical role Connecticut's beverage container deposit program plays in support of essential manufacturing business operations.

Beverage container redemption programs, including Connecticut's, provide critical manufacturing inputs and feedstock for essential manufacturing businesses and their customers (food and beverage companies).

The high quality of recyclables collected and purchased by our industries from these beverage container deposit programs are generally unmatched, require very little sortation and can go quickly back into our manufacturing processes. Simply put, as our industries have ramped up production to meet unprecedented demand for packaged food and beverages, a strong, dependable supply chain of recycled material is essential.

#### Recycled Materials as Part of the Essential Manufacturing Supply Chain

To date, all issued local and state executive orders regarding essential businesses and shelter in place orders have recognized food and beverage manufacturing companies, along with their supply chain partners, as essential businesses and operations. This same supply chain includes companies that collect, process and otherwise handle recyclables across the country.

Beverage container deposit systems generally account for 20-60% of our collective materials input batch, and Connecticut is a key beverage container deposit state. Over the past few weeks, purchasers of Connecticut's recycled bottle bill materials have seen significant volumes decrease, with one purchasing company reporting an 80% decline.

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***“Beverage container deposit systems generally account for 20-60% of our collective materials input batch***

***.... Simply put, as our industries have ramped up production to meet unprecedented demand for packaged food and beverages, a strong, dependable supply chain of recycled material is essential.”***

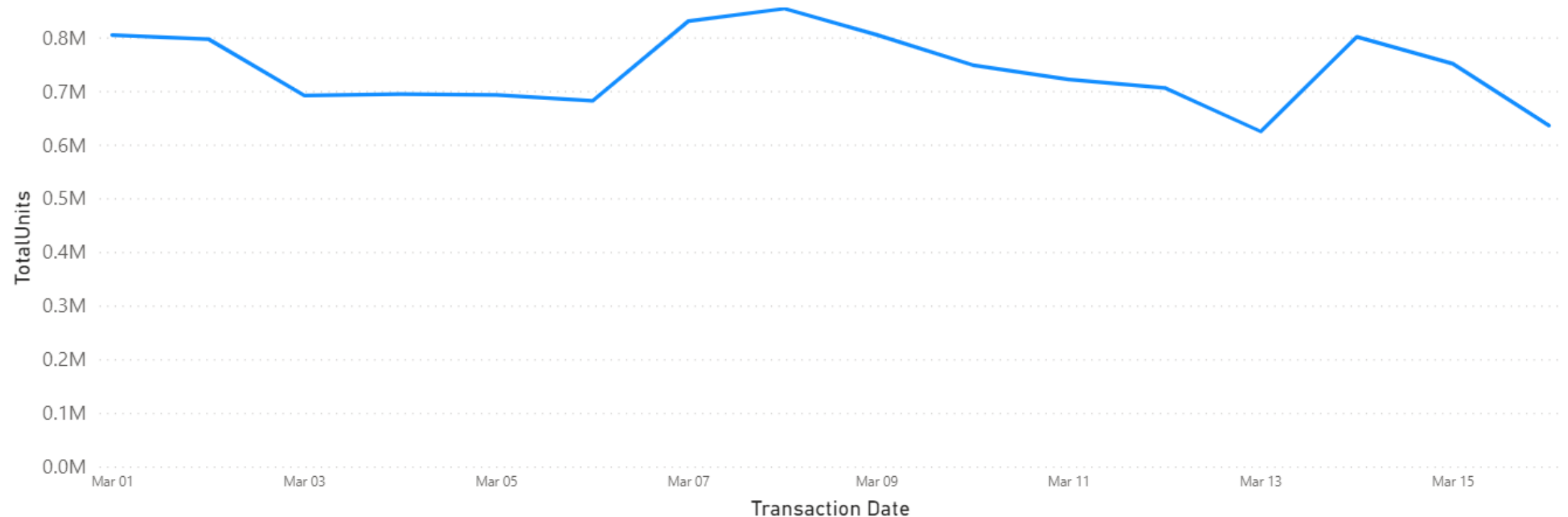


*Letter sent to Commissioner Dykes*

# Before the pandemic TOMRA collected about 1 million units per day for recycling via RVMs

## Containers Collected for Recycling (TOMRA CT Online RVM only)

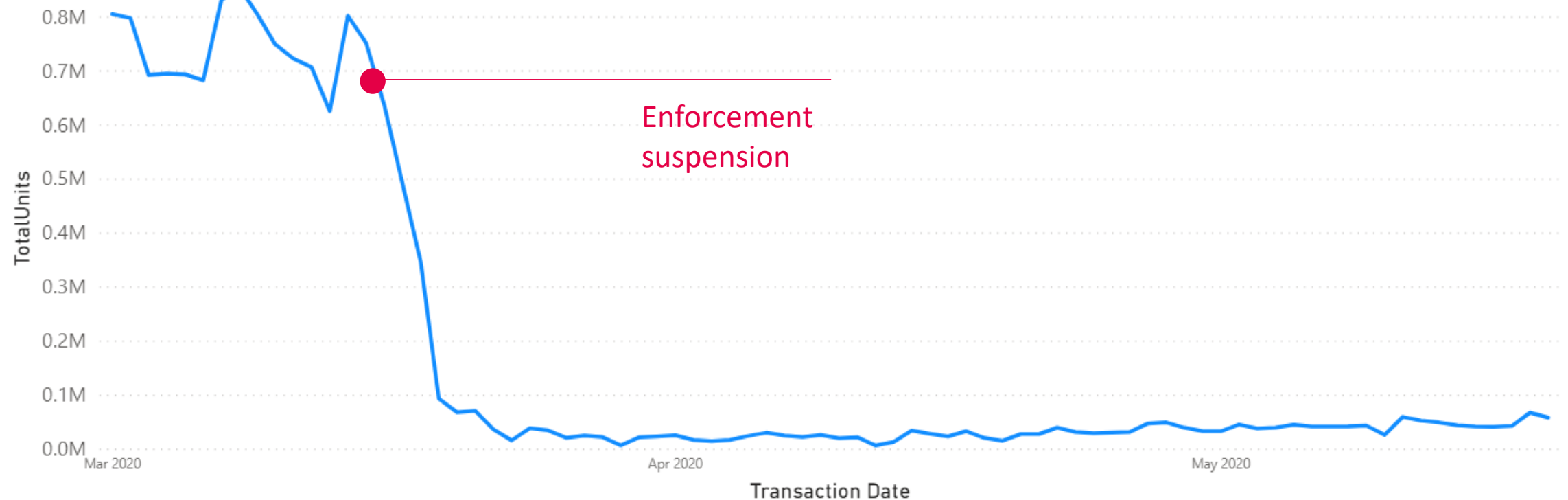
TotalUnits by Year, Quarter, Month and Day



# Within a week of DEEP's enforcement suspension, container deposit recycling collection volume dropped to near zero

## Containers Collected for Recycling (TOMRA CT RVM only)

TotalUnits by Year, Quarter, Month and Day



# Phased reopening announced for May 20<sup>th</sup> and June 3<sup>rd</sup>



BOTTLE REDEMPTION

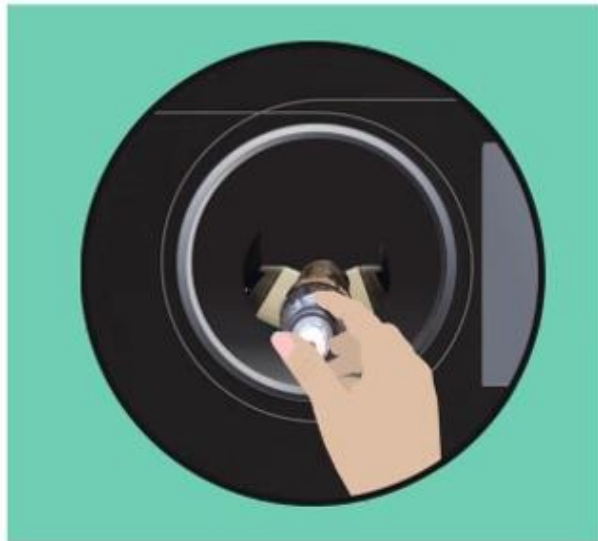
## Limited Bottle Redemption at Stores to Restart May 20



- On May 1<sup>st</sup>, DEEP announced retailer redemption enforcement will return on May 20<sup>th</sup>.
- Sets temporary limitations for a phase-in period between 5/20 – 6/3 to “likely include a
  - daily limit on the number of containers,
  - limited hours to facilitate cleaning,
  - appropriate social distancing requirements, and
  - the wearing of masks.”
- Full reopening announced for June 3<sup>rd</sup>.

We launched a 'Touch-Free Recycling' feature  
and scaled it across Connecticut

*Touch-Free Recycling: How it Works*



1. Insert your  
containers.



2. Wait 15 seconds  
after last container  
is processed.

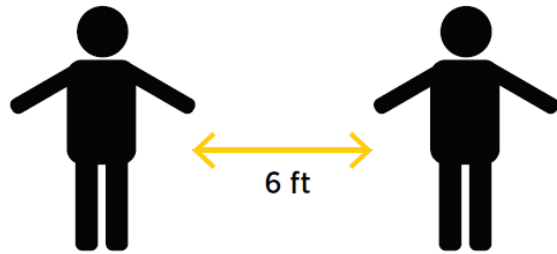


3. The machine will  
automatically print  
your voucher!



# We spread the word any way we could

**KEEP A SAFE  
DISTANCE**



**Please stay 6ft apart**

Thank you for practicing social distancing

Thank you  
for practicing  
social distancing!



## Bottle deposit recycling is returning to Connecticut retailers!

Here's what you need to know to stay safe and informed:



Always maintain **6 feet of social distance** in stores and in line.



Wear a **mask or cloth face covering**.



Call ahead to **check redemption hours** as retail bottle return areas may be operating under reduced hours from May 20 - June 3.



Pay attention and **respect social distance signage and floor markings**.



Stores may **limit redemption to 150 containers per person** from May 20 - June 3.



**Be prepared to wait a bit** to limit occupancy in bottle rooms to 1-2 people.



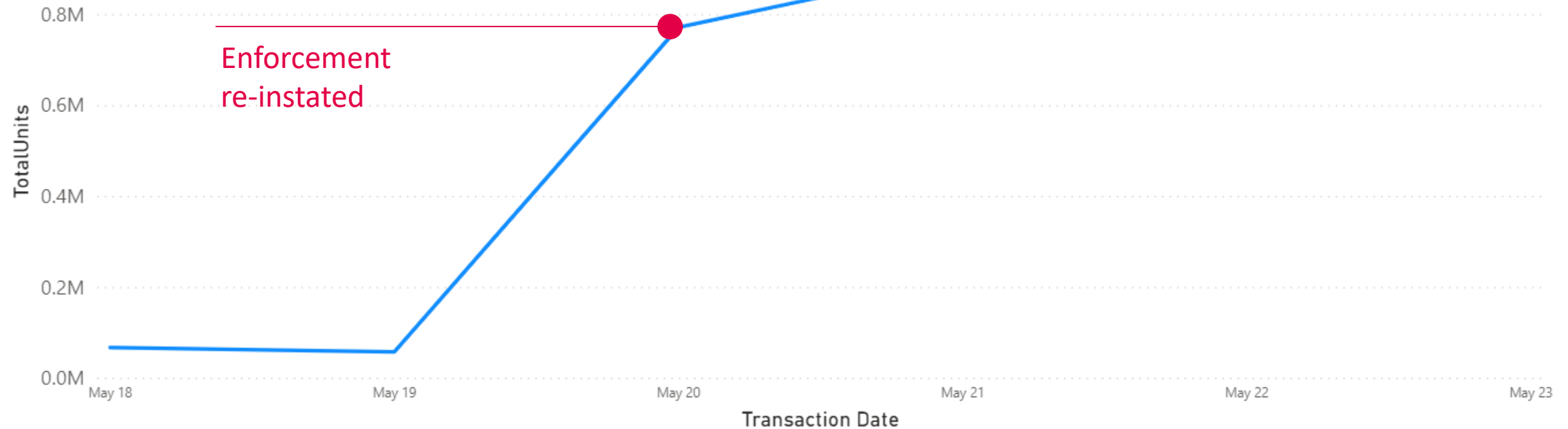
Don't forget to **thank your local grocery store workers** for providing this valuable service!

**TOMRA**

# Upon reopening volume bounced back within 4 days

## Containers Collected for Recycling (TOMRA CT RVM only)

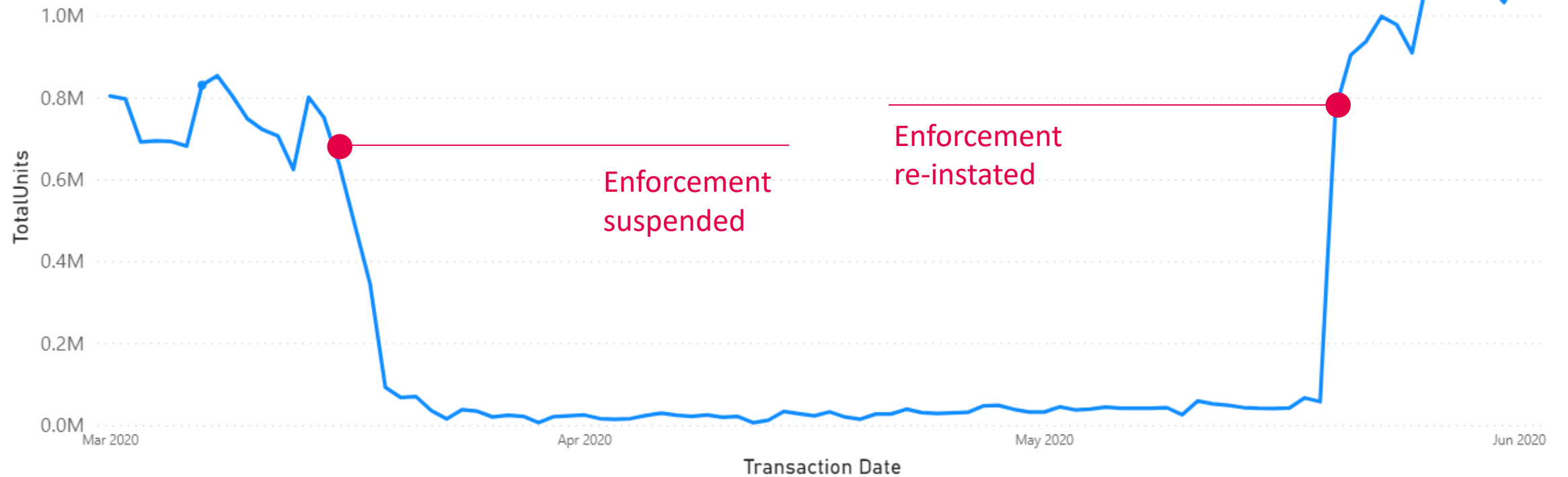
TotalUnits by Year, Quarter, Month and Day



# Pre vs. Post-Suspension Summary

## Containers Collected for Recycling (TOMRA CT RVM only)

TotalUnits by Year, Quarter, Month and Day



Did consumers stockpile their containers or not?

Our theory...



# Field Survey Findings & Observations

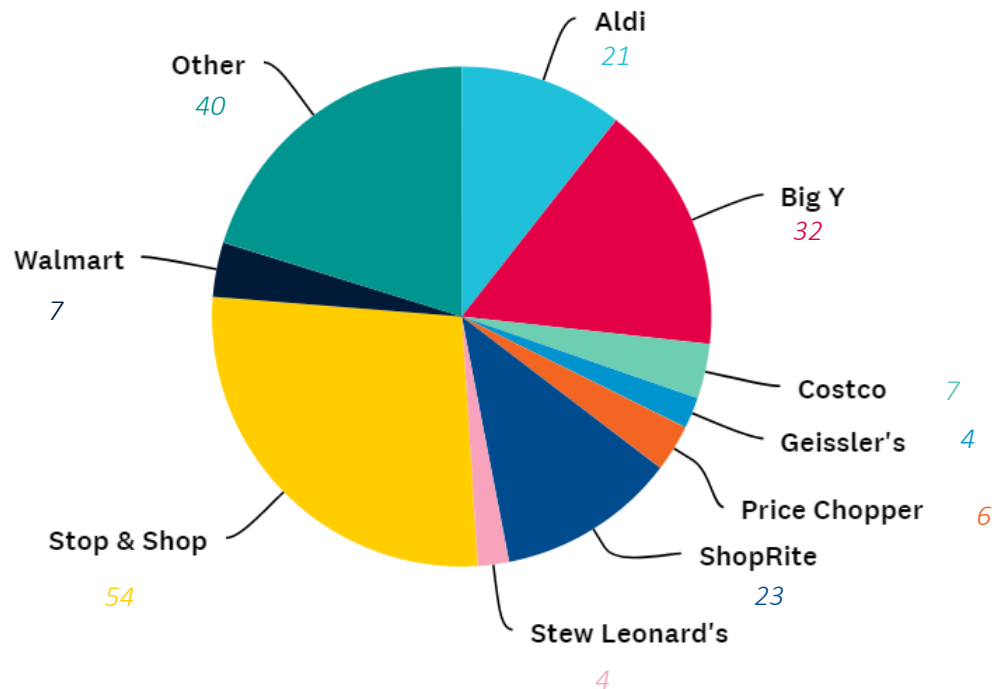
May 20<sup>st</sup> – 22<sup>nd</sup>



# Overview

Between May 20 – May 22, TOMRA volunteers visited and observed redemption at **199 retailers** across the state of Connecticut to gather insights on redemption behavior, operational needs and social distancing.

*Chains Visited*



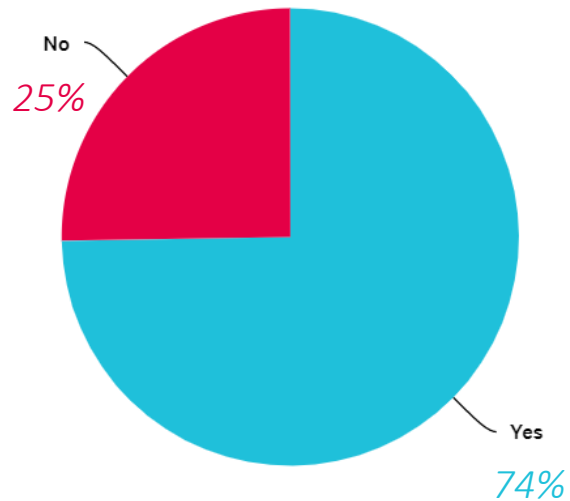
*Towns Most Visited*



# General Observations

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*Are the store's RVMs  
turned on?\**



\*Some stores visited may have simply been closed for cleaning or closed due to limiting redemption hours rather than not offering redemption at all.

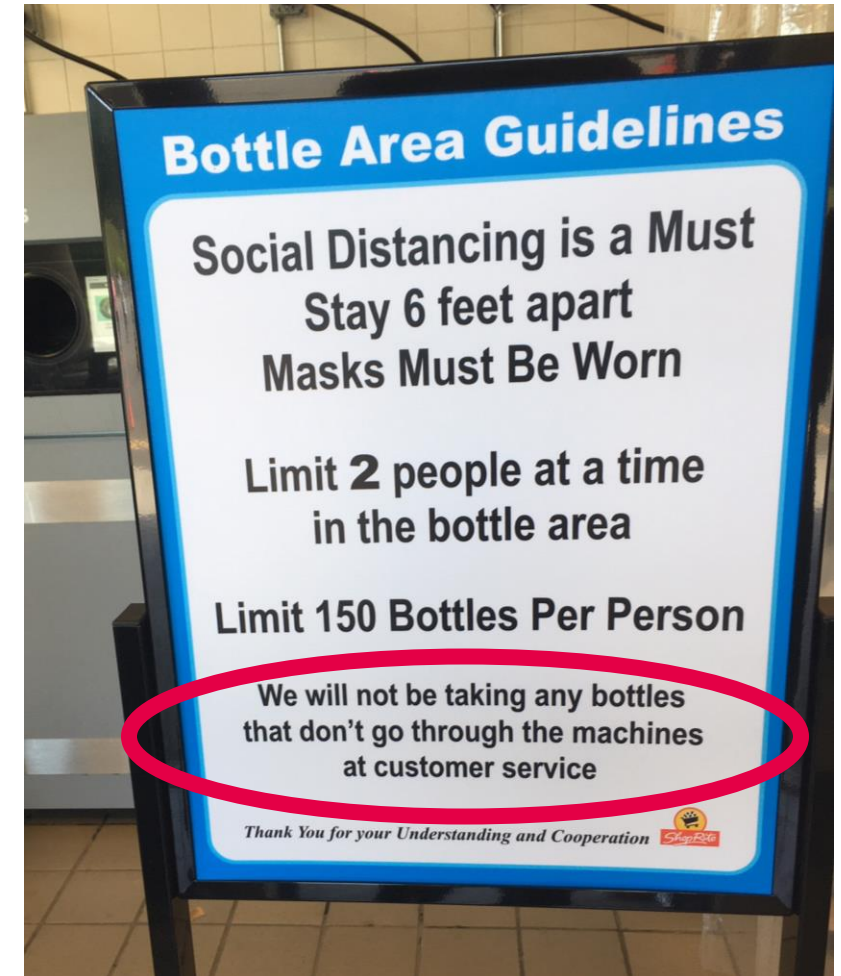
*Approximate number of  
recyclers observed*

432

*Nearly all wore masks  
and were adhering to  
posted distancing  
requirements*

# Some stores decided to only offer automated redemption

Most Big Y locations and at least one Shop Rite location directed consumers to RVMs for redemption, stating that they would not accept containers manually in store, presumably due to the limited touch points and person-to-person contact offered by RVMs.





# Key Learnings

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Connecticut's  
deposit's program  
has a loyal  
consumer base

Reopening before  
the weekend was wise

Dedicating staff  
to monitor and  
provide customer  
service during the  
phase-in period  
improved the  
experience for  
everyone

Retailers really  
stepped up to the  
plate and deserve  
credit

# Pictures from the field



**Bottle Redemption Policy**

**8:00AM - 11:00AM & 1:00PM - 4:00PM**  
 (reduced hours to allow for thorough cleaning and sanitizing)

- Limit of 1 person in bottle room at all times
- Please follow social distancing guidelines
- Maximum of 150 bottles/cans redeemed per day per customer
- Bottles and cans must be clean and empty
- We accept bottles and cans that we currently sell with a CT Deposit
- For everyone's health and wellness, please do not place bottles/cans in carriages

NOTE: Bottles/Cans cannot be redeemed inside until further notice.

**X MARKS THE SPOT**



Please stand on the marked Xs ONLY

**WELCOME TO TOUCH-FREE RECYCLING**



1. Insert your containers



2. Wait 15 seconds after last container is processed



3. The machine will automatically print your voucher

**KEEPING YOU SAFE WHEN YOU RECYCLE**

We have implemented several measures for your safety when returning your containers

- Social distancing signage
- Touch-free recycling on our machines
- Improved cleaning routines

Thank you for doing your part!

Big Y  
 West Hartford, CT

# What We Saw

ShopRite  
Clinton, CT



Costco  
Milford, CT



# What We Saw

Stop & Shop  
Stamford, CT



Big Y  
Mansfield, CT

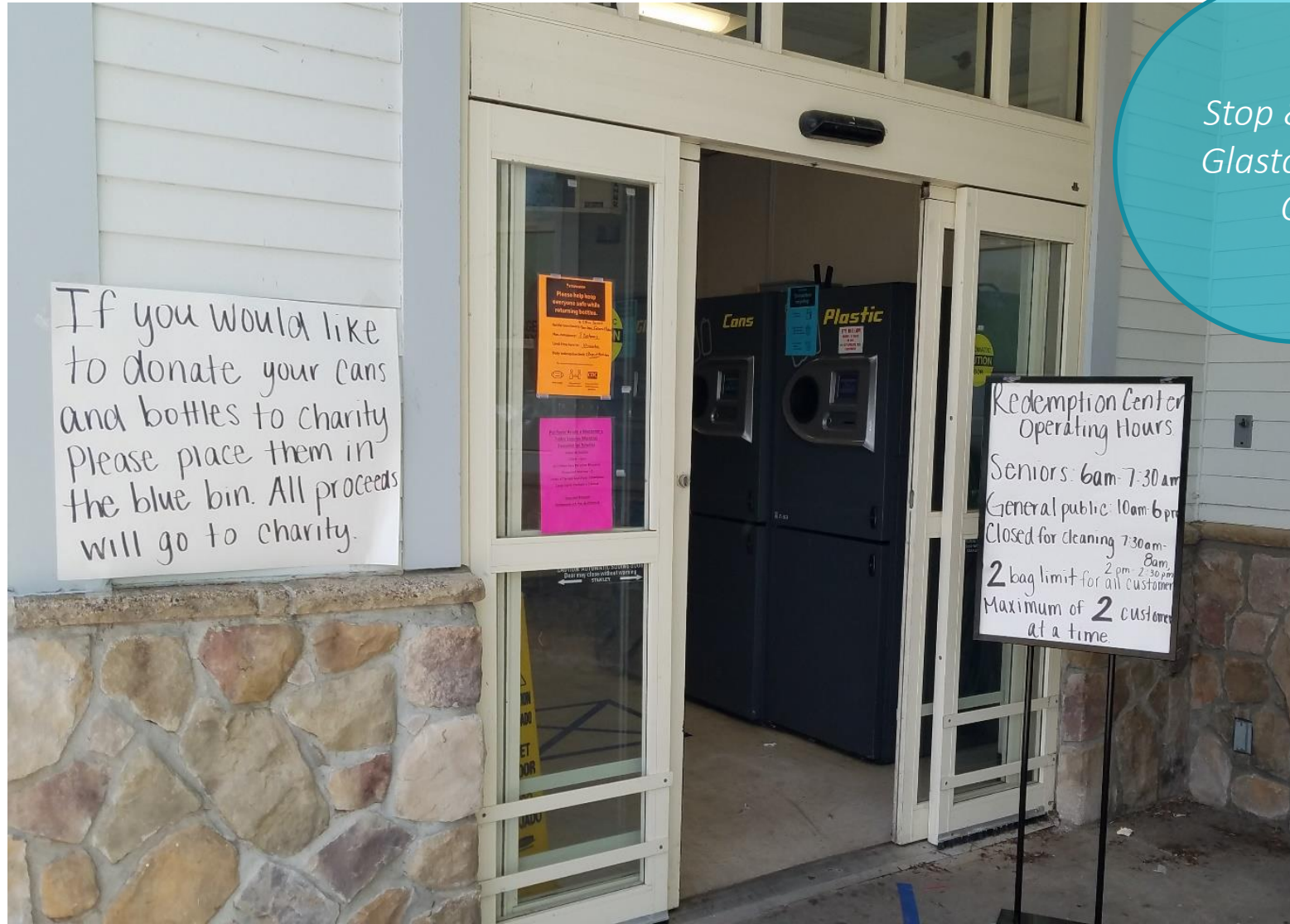


# What We Saw



Costco  
Norwalk, CT

# What We Saw



Stop & Shop  
Glastonbury,  
CT

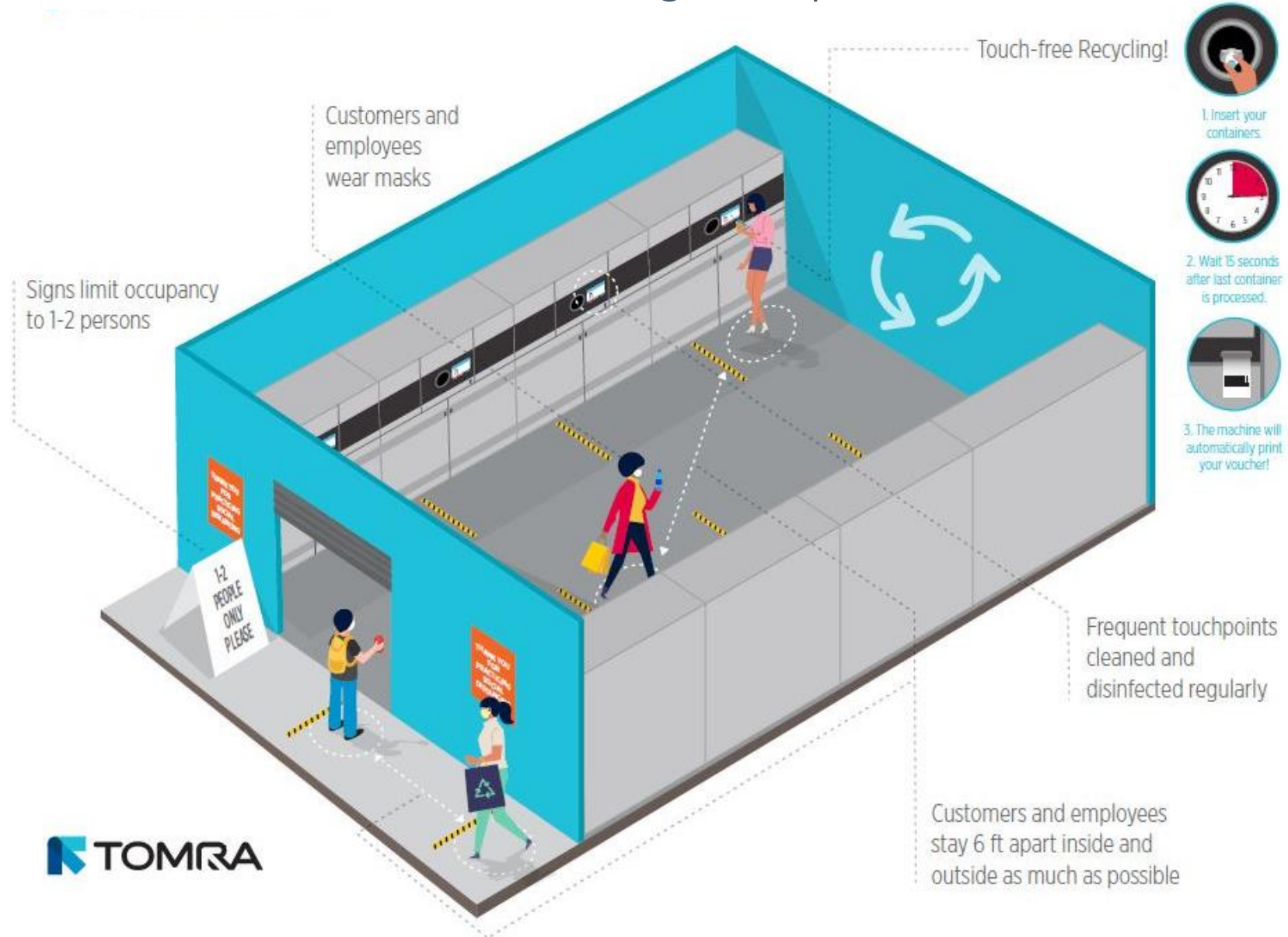
# Health & Safety Best Practice Precautions for Redemption Operations During COVID-19

A value chain perspective





# We worked with retailers to implement new social distancing best practices

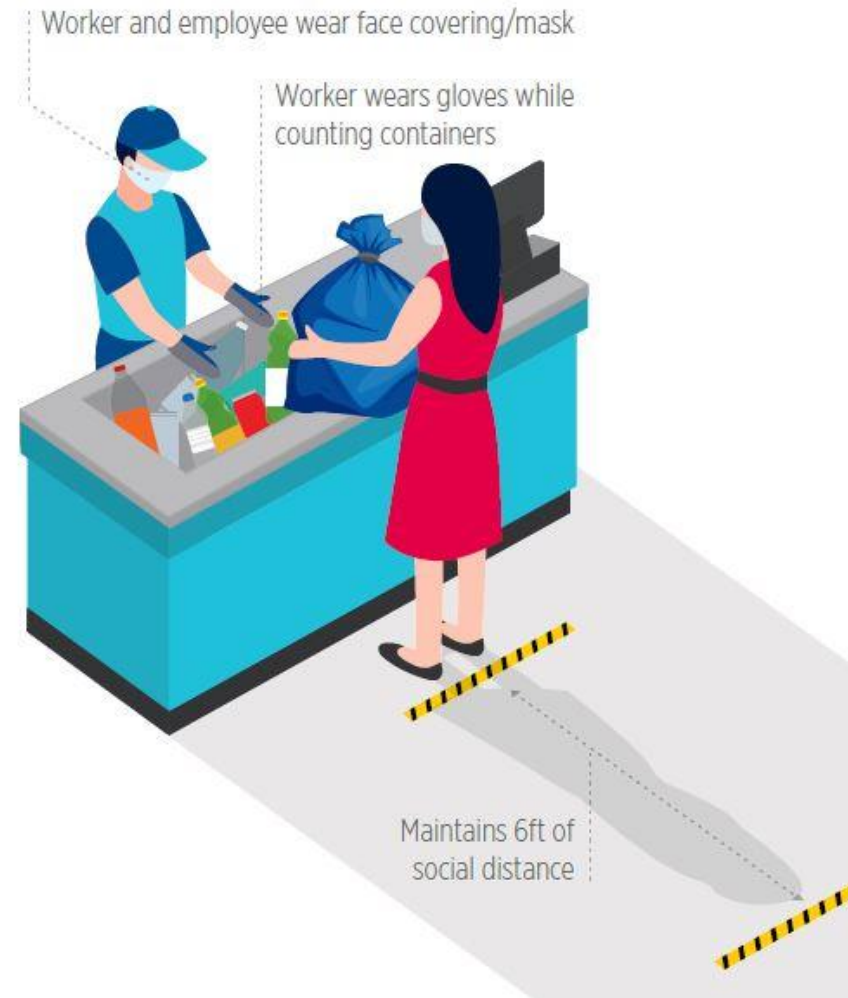


# PROTECTING PUBLIC HEALTH DURING REDEMPTION: RETAIL WORKERS

## AUTOMATED REDEMPTION

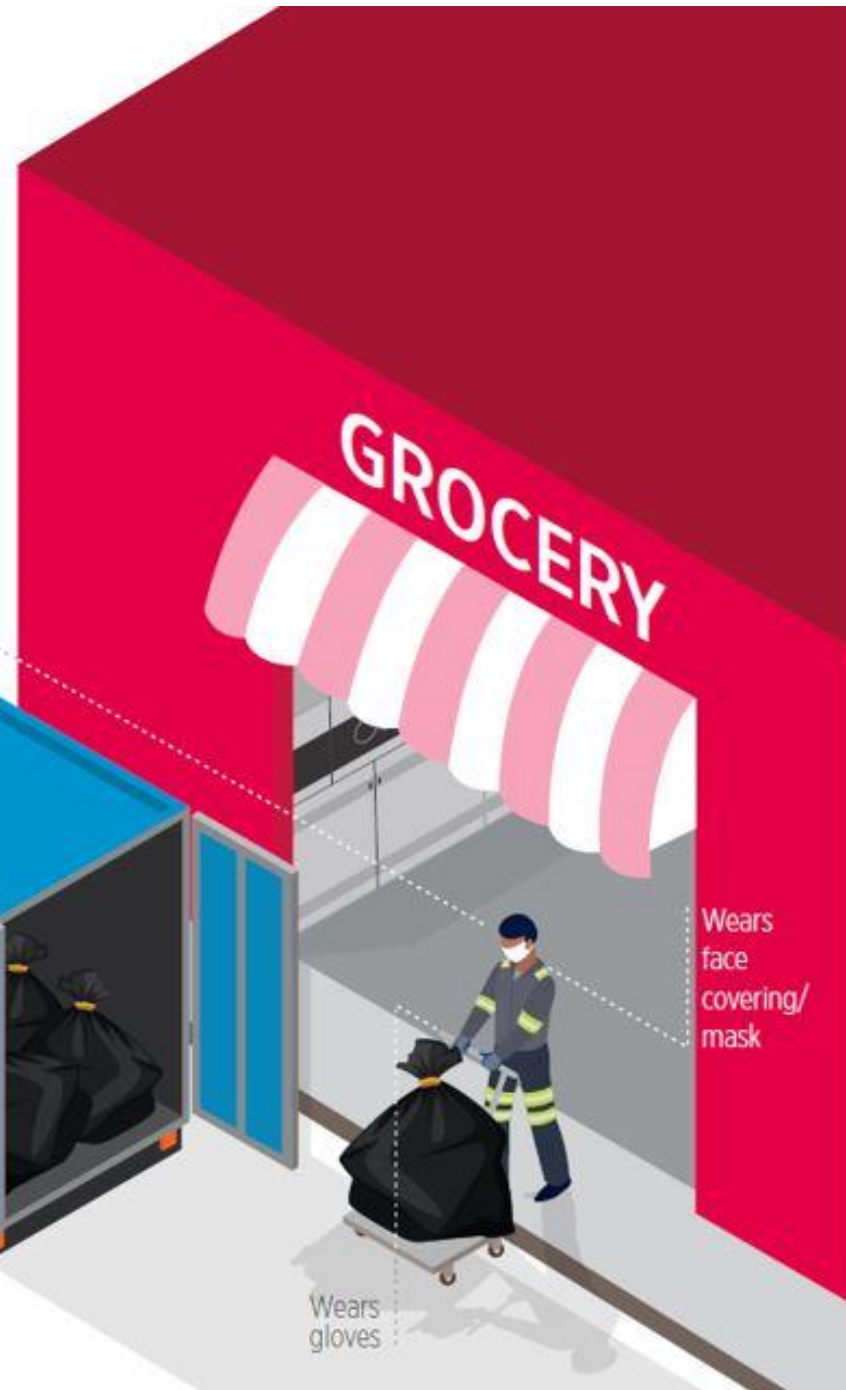


## MANUAL REDEMPTION



# PROTECTING PUBLIC HEALTH DURING REDEMPTION: CONTAINER PICK-UP DRIVERS

Pick-up drivers handle plastic bins or bags from RVMs or plastic bags from manual redemption locations, not containers.

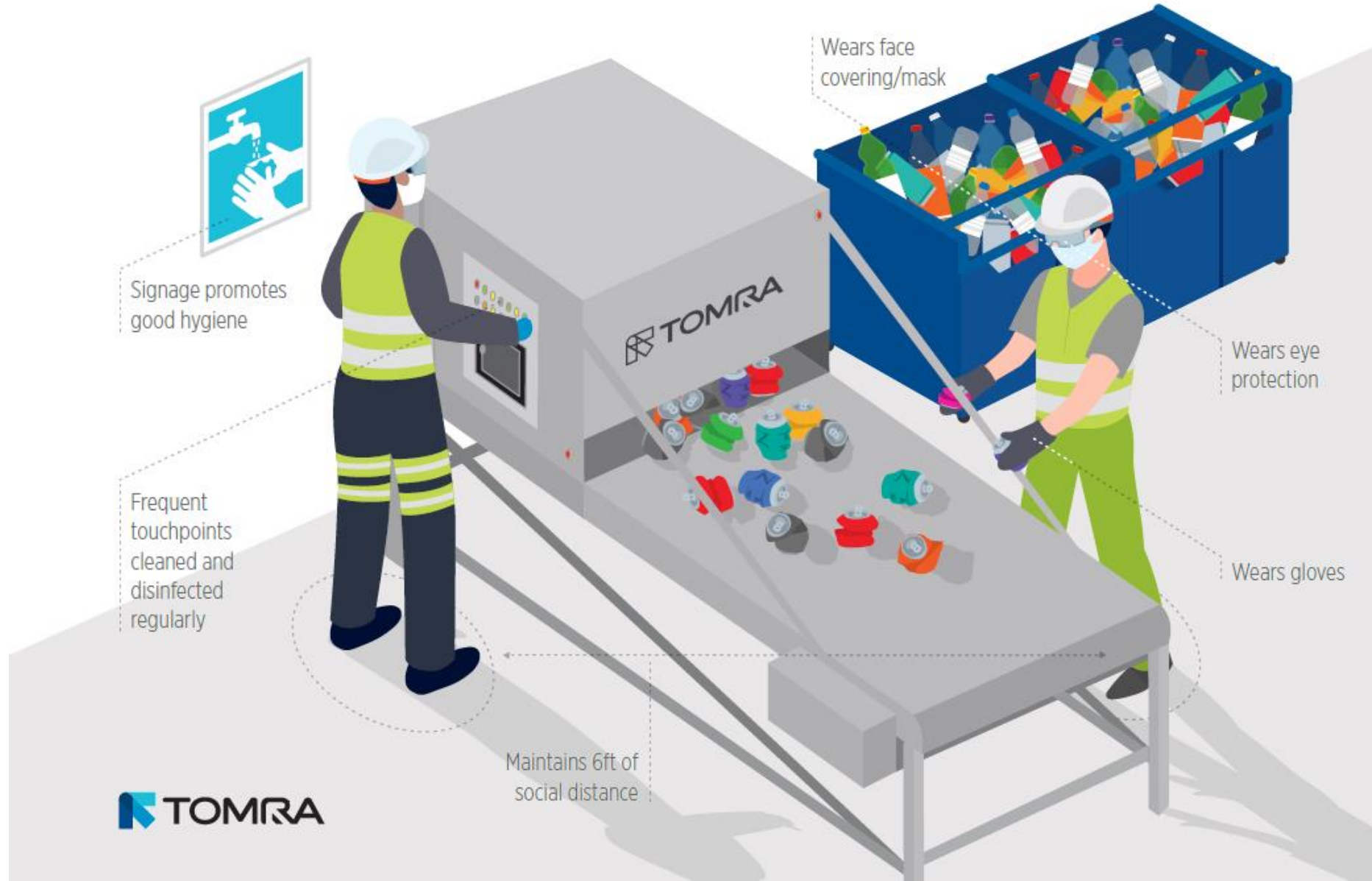


Wears face covering/mask

Wears gloves



# PROTECTING PUBLIC HEALTH DURING REDEMPTION: PROCESSING FACILITY WORKERS





[www.tomra.com](http://www.tomra.com)