

Convenience & Carwash

MARCH/APRIL 2026

 **CANADA**



Hasty Market: Modern Neighbourhood Store PAGE 08

Store
Layouts:
Designing
for Safety
and Sales
PAGE 11

Retail
Theft: The
Real Costs
PAGE 32

Hot
Beverage
Equipment:
Heating Up
Sales
PAGE 16

Carwash
Memberships:
Turning
Washes Into
Relationships
PAGE 23

Carwash
Equipment
Chart:
Leading
Companies
PAGE 26

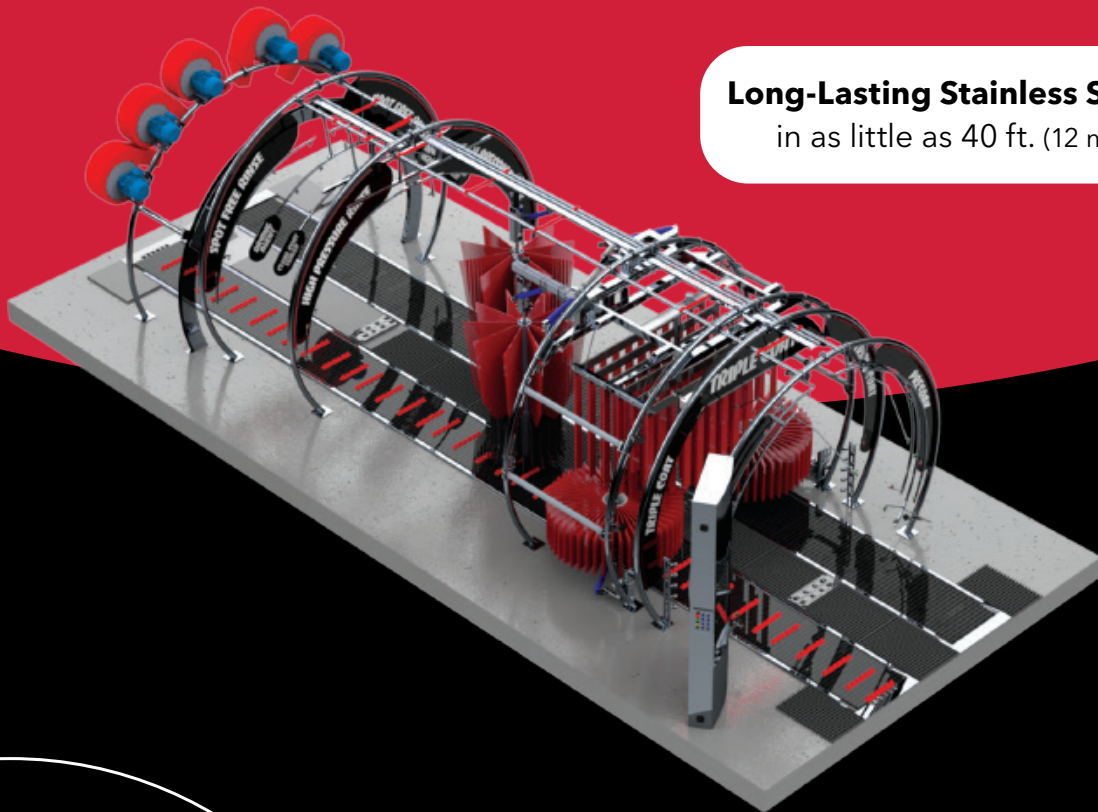
Forecourt
Insight:
Spring
Stress Test
PAGE 40

12th Women
in Carwash:
Conference
Highlights
PAGE 37



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08

Hasty Market
Modern Neighbourhood Store

04
Publisher's Message
Spring is Here

05
Editor's Message
We Still Love a Cup of Coffee in the Morning



Petroleum and Carwash

23
Carwash Memberships.
Turning Washes into Relationships

28
Carwash Operating Expenses
Proactive Strategies

34
In-Floor Heating
Core Infrastructure

40
Forecourt Insight
Spring Stress Test



Industry News

06
Human Resources
Managing Work Attendance

21
Cash Advance Funding
Small Business Guide

26
Carwash Equipment Chart
Leading Companies and Their Offerings

37
12th Women in Carwash
Conference Highlights



Instore and Nutrition

11
Store Layouts
Designing for Safety and Sales

15
Advertorial
Trial & Travel Section

16
Hot Beverage Equipment
Heating Up Sales

32
Retail Theft
The Real Costs

44
Announcements

UPCOMING EVENTS

April 14, 2026
Atlantic Convenience Expo
Halifax Convention Centre,
Halifax, NS
www.theaceshow.ca/

May 13–15, 2026
PEI Women
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October 6–9, 2026
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Las Vegas, NV
www.nacsshow.com

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May 11–13, 2026
The Car Wash Show
Nashville, TN
www.thecarwashshow.com

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Spring is Here

Here comes Spring! Welcome to the latest issue of *Convenience & Carwash Canada* magazine!

In this edition, we spotlight the latest advancements in hot beverage equipment, exploring how innovation is brewing new possibilities for operators seeking to enhance customer experiences and drive profitability. Our feature dives into the must-have machines and trends shaping the future of in-store coffee and beverage services.

We're also excited to share highlights from the inspiring Women in Carwash conference. This special recap celebrates the leadership, community, and professional growth fostered at the event, and showcases the voices of women who are making a powerful impact in our industry.

Additionally, Axel Foley takes you beneath the surface – literally – with a practical look at carwash heated floors. Learn how this technology is improving safety, efficiency, and year-round operations for the carwashing industry.

Of course, there's much more inside. From business strategy tips to the latest product reviews, we continue our mission to provide you with the knowledge and tools you need to succeed.

As always, your success is my business, and my open-door policy for your valuable feedback remains intact and stronger than ever. If you have an editorial topic that you want us to cover, or perhaps you would like to be featured in an upcoming edition, we'd love to hear from you. Email me at bjjohnstone@convenienceand-carwash.com

Here's to a season of growth, innovation, and connection!

Brenda Jane Johnstone PUBLISHER

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We Still Love a Cup of Coffee in the Morning

Many Canadians turn to a hot beverage, often coffee, to help wake them up and get them going in the morning.

The Coffee Association of Canada (CAC) recently released the latest edition of its *Canadian Coffee Drinking Study*, which notes that coffee remains the most consumed beverage in 2025 “despite economic pressures and rising food and beverage costs.”

The rising cost of coffee was a topic of discussion during the recent CAC webinar, *Green Coffee Supply Chain: From Sourcing Strategy to Logistics*. Alvin Suissa, president, Ken Gabbay Coffee Ltd. noted that coffee pricing is no longer easily forecasted while Albert Scalla, senior vice president of trading, StoneX Financial Inc., noted that there is a lot of uncertainty in the coffee market.

“The past five years, the weather has been extremely volatile and keeping an eye on the weather for the next three months is going to be key for the market,” said Scalla.

Traditional coffee continues to be the most popular beverage choice for Canadians, even as price escalates. Seventy-one per cent of Canadians surveyed in the CAC study said they drank a coffee beverage yesterday and 45 per cent had a traditional coffee. However, all traditional coffee isn't the same and buying a less than favourable cup of coffee, especially when the cost is higher, can put a dismal start to a customer's day.

In this issue, the article *Equipment Options That Heat Up Beverage Sales* tells us that hot beverage equipment has evolved beyond basic drip coffee brewers to automated and advanced technology that can deliver café-quality beverages. Is your business keeping up with hot beverage trends and customer expectations?

Consumers agree that convenience stores are just as capable of delivering quality coffee as coffee shops, but they want freshness, clean beverage areas, customization options, speed and value, says Amy Brown, marketing manager, SEB Professional. Read the article to find out more about what consumers are looking for in hot beverages and which equipment can best meet their needs. Compare this to your offerings to see whether you are taking full advantage of the profit potential of coffee and hot beverages.

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AWARDS





BY RENEE BOYDA

MANAGING WORK ATTENDANCE DURING INCLEMENT WEATHER AND EMERGENCY CLOSURES

Extreme weather, natural disasters and other emergency situations can create serious safety hazards for workers commuting to and from their jobs. Canadian employers, particularly in regions prone to snowstorms, flooding, icy conditions, or wildfires must be prepared to manage these scenarios as well as ensure the safety of their employees. While large organizations often have formal emergency response systems, small businesses face tougher decisions about whether to stay open, what their legal responsibilities are, how to pay staff, and how to manage absences fairly and legally.

Employers are responsible for exercising good judgment, due diligence and prioritizing safety and compliance with occupational health and safety laws. Employers have a duty of care, meaning they have a legal duty to ensure employees are not exposed to undue risks, which includes discouraging travel when conditions are unsafe – even commutes. Employers must be aware of all possible situations that could pose undue risk to the safety of employees during commutes. These include:

- closed highways or impassable roads due to heavy snowfall, ice, or flooding.
- official travel advisories or local states of emergency where authorities urge the public to stay home.
- severe weather warnings from Environment Canada, such as blizzards, tornadoes, or freezing rain events that make driving hazardous.
- natural disasters such as wildfires, earthquakes, or major storms that disrupt infrastructure or threaten property.

Therefore, when a local government, RCMP or transportation authority issue a road or highway closure or travel ban, employers and employees should follow those directives and eliminate the potential hazards.

Another consideration for employers is how to handle pay entitlements. If the employer closes the workplace due to the severity of the situation, before employees have reported to work, employees are not required to be paid unless company policy, employment contracts or collective agreements state otherwise. However, if employees have reported to work, then the workplace closes later, those employees will need to be paid for their time worked or at least your province's minimum reporting pay (usually three hours pay but can vary by province), whichever is higher. Employees who are unable to report to work due to the conditions do not need to be paid. An employer can offer an employee the option to use a vacation day, banked hours if applicable, making up the hours or having the missed time unpaid. It is important to note that requiring employees to use their vacation for their absence in this situation undermines the purpose of vacation, which is intended for rest and recovery. Forcing use of vacation can create legal and employee-relations risks if it appears inconsistent or punitive, potentially discouraging employees from making safe decisions in the future and increasing health and safety liabilities for the employer.

Disciplinary action for absences in these circumstances should be handled carefully, recognizing that such events often create unavoidable challenges for employees. Beyond personal safety, many employees

must also manage family-related responsibilities – such as school closures, child-care disruptions, or caring for dependents. Employers should consider these legitimate circumstances before considering discipline. Consistency and empathy are key. Discipline should only be considered if the absence is unreasonable, uncommunicated, or inconsistent with policy and procedure. If an employer suspects an employee is using adverse weather to avoid attending work, they must investigate the matter and consider the employee's individual circumstances, such as the severity of the weather and whether the employee made reasonable efforts to attend work.

Employers can best manage these unpredictable situations through clear planning and communication. Effective policies protect employee safety, minimize liability, and maintain organizational or operational continuity. Employers should develop a comprehensive policy that defines decision makers, roles, communication methods (via text,

phone calls, company website), the communication plan (from proactive notifications before anticipated events to real time updates as conditions evolve, specifying if work is cancelled, safety instructions and reporting procedures), pay expectations, potential


alternative work options (if available) as well as the employee's responsibilities. Ensure that your supervisors respond consistently and fairly when such events occur and encourage cross training so that more employees can cover essential functions in the event not all employees can make it

to work. Debrief with your supervisors and staff after serious weather events to identify what worked well and what improvements could be made for future responses. Finally, employers must keep documentation of the event – closure decisions, communications, attendance records (in case of questions arising regarding pay or disciplinary action later), debrief notes and future improvements

EMPLOYERS HAVE A DUTY OF CARE, MEANING THEY HAVE A LEGAL DUTY TO ENSURE EMPLOYEES ARE NOT EXPOSED TO UNDUE RISKS.

or considerations.

A well-handled inclement weather plan or emergency closure not only prevents accidents but reinforces your reputation as a responsible, caring employer - something that matters as much in business as any sale or service delivered.

If you need assistance with this, or any other HR related matter, please contact us at TIPI Legacy HR+: tipilegacyHR@tipipartners.com. 

Renee Boyda is a human resources consultant with Legacy Bowes. She is a CPHR candidate, received her Bachelor of Arts in Sociology from the University of Manitoba, and received both Human Resource Management and Management Development Certificates with Honours from Red River College. She is focused on building HR structures and processes to create consistency and fairness in workplaces across Canada. Renee is a proud Metis, with over 12 years of human resource experience in both union and non-union environments. She can be reached at (204) 947-5525.



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BY MELINE BEACH

More Than a Tagline: Hasty Market Redefines the Modern Neighbourhood Store

At 45 years, Hasty Market isn't standing still. Since opening its first store in Hamilton, Ontario in 1981, the brand has grown to 130 locations operating under three banners: Hasty Market, Mini-A-Mart and The Market On, the newest addition to Hasty Market's portfolio.

Proudly Canadian, the company has long operated under the tagline "more than a convenience store." That means a strategic range of products and services, stronger community connections and a focused approach to growth.

For Marietta Cini, vice-president of operations and development, the company's tagline isn't marketing copy, it's a mandate. "As a cornerstone of convenience, our stores are neighbourhood hubs where customers feel welcomed and expect freshness, choice and speed," she says.

From corner store to neighbourhood hub

Historically, Hasty Market locations offered typical convenience store items, such as chips, pop, lottery and tobacco. While these traditional traffic drivers built the convenience channel, consumer expectations have since changed. Today's customer wants speed and quality of choice without compromise. They want fresh options, including produce, bakery items, deli, pizza, coffee and meals to go without navigating a

WE'RE BUILDING A CONVENIENT GROCER WHERE CUSTOMERS CAN COMPLETE A MEANINGFUL PORTION OF THEIR WEEKLY SHOP IN ONE VISIT.

Marietta Cini, vice-president of operations and development at Hasty Market

big-box store or walking 30,000 square feet of grocery aisles just to spend \$30.

Many Hasty Market locations now go well beyond classic convenience, aiming to offer exactly what customers want. Every product and service is thoughtfully curated to serve local communities. The result is a true one-stop shop for busy lifestyles, a strategy that becomes even clearer under the company's newest banner, Market On.

Positioned as a "convenient grocer," Market On is intentionally built around top-up grocery trips. Customers can complete more of their everyday shopping close to home and be in and out in under 10 minutes without sacrificing quality or selection.

"Ultimately, both Hasty Market and Market On are designed to meet customers where they are," says Cini. "We're providing convenience, freshness and community connection in a format that respects their time."

As grocery prices rise, time pressures increase and alcohol rules evolve, which all shape consumer behaviour, Hasty Market's strategy seems timely.

Right-sizing for today's shopper

Size matters as stores attempt to balance fresh food, grocery, alcohol and traditional convenience categories.

Most Hasty Market locations operate in footprints of 1,000 square feet or more, with the largest reaching approximately 4,000 square feet. With the introduction of beer and wine, the company has determined that 1,000 square feet is the minimum viable size to deliver sufficient assortment, drive meaningful sales, and achieve sustainable unit economics.

"It becomes increasingly difficult to meet customer expectations in locations below that threshold," says Cini.

For Market On, the target footprint ranges from 2,500 to 4,000 square feet. The larger format supports expanded grocery, fresh food programs, meal solutions and alcohol offerings, all of which require sufficient space to merchandise effectively and profitably.

That footprint allows for a larger assortment, improved traffic flow and a more comfortable shopping experience, which contribute to larger basket sizes and stronger franchise returns.

"We're not trying to build a bigger convenience store," says Cini. "We're building a convenient grocer where customers can complete a meaningful portion of their weekly shop in one visit."

Balancing brand standards

One of the ongoing challenges in franchise models is balancing brand standards with local autonomy. Hasty Market aims to operate deliberately in that middle ground, recognizing that every community is unique.

"We work closely with our franchisees to ensure brand consistency, while encouraging them to allocate approximately 10 per cent of their product mix to items tailored to their local communities," says Cini. "This balanced approach allows us to remain locally relevant while preserving a cohesive brand experience."

That flexibility not only drives incremental sales but also fosters a stronger sense of ownership among franchise partners, empowering them to serve their neighbourhoods authentically rather than operating within a rigid, prescriptive model.

The company believes this balance helps deliver a consistent experience while staying closely connected to each community.

Strategic merchandising for local impact

Across Market On locations, approximately 65 per cent of sales come from core food and convenience categories, including grocery, produce, deli, snacks and hot meal replacements. The remaining 35 per cent is generated by lottery and tobacco, which historically have been important traffic drivers.

But that mix is shifting. Tobacco sales have been in steady decline for years, while fresh food and ready-to-eat categories continue to grow.

Cini says, "Our goal is to establish Market On and Hasty Market as reliable neighbourhood destinations for beer and wine, with a strong assortment that meets everyday needs."

The company's strategy goes beyond alcohol. Their >>



main objective is to encourage customers to complete a meaningful grocery shop in their stores, from fresh produce and deli items to pantry staples and bakery offerings, rather than stopping in for a single-item purchase. Their focus is on building baskets, not just transactions.

“This shift positions us for sustainable growth and reinforces our role as a convenient grocer and community hub, not just a convenience store,” says Cini.

A franchise-driven future

Hasty Market operates a mix of licensed and franchised locations, however; its Market On banner is strictly franchised, with an immediate priority to scale across Ontario. Currently, three Market On stores are operating, one is under construction, and three additional franchisees are actively securing sites. From

“We look for franchise partners who bring an entrepreneurial mindset, are deeply customer-focused and share our commitment to building strong community connections,” says Cini. “Our stores are neighbourhood hubs, and the most successful franchisees are those who take pride in their locations, understand their local customers and are actively involved in their day-to-day operations.”

That community-first operating philosophy has sustained the company for the last 45 years and will shape its future.

As the convenience and carwash industry continues to evolve, the stores that thrive are those that understand their communities and deliver what their customers truly need. For Hasty Market, “More than a convenience store” is not just a tagline, it’s their blueprint for success. **■**



AS A CORNERSTONE OF CONVENIENCE, OUR STORES ARE NEIGHBOURHOOD HUBS WHERE CUSTOMERS FEEL WELCOMED AND EXPECT FRESHNESS, CHOICE AND SPEED



a site-selection perspective, the company prioritizes visibility, accessibility and strong community demographics.

“Scale must align with economic fundamentals,” says Cini. “In a retail environment where rent, labour and shrink pressures margins, the wrong footprint can sink a concept before it stabilizes.”

That disciplined approach extends beyond real estate.

“Our growth is intentional and measured,” says Cini. “We’re focused on refining our systems, strengthening brand consistency and ensuring operational excellence within Ontario before expanding further. Once we feel confident in our platform and scalability, we will begin exploring opportunities in other provinces.”

As expansion plans take shape, franchise selection remains a critical piece of the strategy. Scaling responsibly depends just as much on the right operators as it does on infrastructure.



Meline Beach is a Toronto-based communications practitioner and frequent contributor to Convenience and Carwash Canada. In addition to freelance writing, Meline provides communications and public relations support to businesses across Canada. She can be reached at www.mlbcomms.ca.



DESIGNING FOR SAFETY AND SALES:

BY SEAN SPORTUN, SMVOL, ICPS, SAS-AP

HOW SMART STORE LAYOUTS DRIVE SECURITY AND THE BOTTOM LINE

In today's retail environment, store design is no longer just about aesthetics or customer flow, it is a critical business strategy that directly impacts safety, shrink reduction, employee confidence, and ultimately profitability. Thoughtful store layout and design can deter criminal activity before it occurs, reduce operational risk, and simultaneously enhance the customer experience in ways that drive sales.

At the core of effective security-focused design is Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED). When properly applied, CPTED principles do not make stores feel restrictive or unwelcoming. Instead, they create environments that are intuitive, open, and secure—benefiting customers, employees, and the business alike.

CPTED: Designing Crime Out of the Environment

CPTED is built on three foundational principles that are particularly relevant to retail environments:

- > Natural Surveillance
- > Natural Access Control
- > Territorial Reinforcement

When integrated into store design and layout decisions, these principles help retailers reduce crime opportunities while improving visibility, flow, and engagement - key drivers of retail success.

Natural Surveillance: Visibility Is the First Line of Defense

Natural surveillance refers to designing spaces so that people can easily see and be seen. Criminal behavior thrives in environments where anonymity and concealment exist; visibility disrupts that advantage.

>>



WELL-LIT INTERIORS IMPROVE PRODUCT VISIBILITY AND REDUCE EMPLOYEE STRESS, WHILE EXTERIOR LIGHTING AROUND ENTRANCES, PARKING AREAS, AND SIDEWALKS ENHANCES CUSTOMER CONFIDENCE AND DETERS CRIMINAL ACTIVITY AFTER DARK.

Open Sightlines Drive Safety and Sales

Clear, unobstructed sightlines from the sales floor to entrances, exits, and high-risk areas are critical. Tall shelving, cluttered displays, and poorly positioned promotional fixtures can unintentionally create blind spots, ideal conditions for theft, violence, or unsafe behavior.

From a sales perspective, open sightlines:

- Improve customer navigation and comfort
- Encourage longer dwell time
- Increase staff engagement with customers
- Reduce perceived risk, which directly influences purchasing behavior

Lower shelving heights, transparent fixtures, and strategic product placement allow staff to monitor activity while still delivering strong visual merchandising.

Lighting Matters: Inside and Out

Consistent, high-quality lighting is one of the most cost-effective crime deterrents available. Well-lit interiors improve product visibility and reduce employee stress, while exterior lighting around entrances, parking areas, and sidewalks enhances customer confidence and deters criminal activity after dark.

Retailers often underestimate the sales impact of lighting. Bright, evenly lit spaces feel safer, cleaner, and more welcoming, qualities customers subconsciously associate with trust and quality.

Natural Access Control: Guiding Behavior Without Barriers

Natural access control uses design to subtly

guide how people enter, move through, and exit a store - without relying on heavy physical security measures.

Controlled Entry and Exit Points

Clearly defined entrances and exits reduce confusion and limit unauthorized movement. From a security standpoint, this:

- Improves monitoring of traffic flow
- Reduces opportunities for theft
- Enhances emergency response capability

From a customer standpoint, intuitive access points create smoother journeys, reduce frustration, and improve conversion rates.

Where possible, avoid secondary exits that are poorly monitored or visually obstructed. If operational needs require them, ensure they are clearly visible and well-lit.

Store Layout as Behavioral Design

The strategic placement of aisles, promotional zones, and service counters influences customer behavior. High-risk merchandise should be positioned in areas with strong natural surveillance, close to staff, checkout lanes, or service desks, rather than isolated corners.

Smart layout design reduces the need for intrusive security measures, allowing staff to focus on service rather than enforcement.

Territorial Reinforcement: Ownership Discourages Crime

Territorial reinforcement is about clearly defining space and reinforcing a sense of ownership, by staff, customers, and the brand.

Design That Signals “This Space Is Managed”

Well-maintained stores with clean lines, clear branding, and intentional layout send a strong message: This space is actively monitored and cared for. Criminals are far less likely to target environments where attention to detail is evident.

Simple design elements that reinforce territorial control include:

- Clear signage and wayfinding
- Consistent branding throughout the store
- Defined staff zones and service areas
- Clean, organized merchandising

When customers feel a sense of belonging and employees feel ownership over their environment, both engagement and safety improve.

The Strategic Placement of the Point of Sale (POS)

The location of the point of sale is one of the most critical security and operational decisions in retail design.

POS as a Control Point

From a security perspective, the POS should:

- Have clear sightlines to entrances and exits
- Be positioned to naturally observe customer movement
- Act as a deterrent to theft and aggressive behavior

From a sales perspective, well-placed POS areas:

- Encourage impulse purchases

- Reduce checkout congestion
 - Improve staff-customer interaction
 - Enhance overall transaction efficiency
- Avoid placing POS counters in isolated or visually obstructed locations. A visible, accessible checkout area reinforces control while improving the customer experience.

CLEAR, UNOBSTRUCTED SIGHTLINES FROM THE SALES FLOOR TO ENTRANCES, EXITS, AND HIGH-RISK AREAS ARE CRITICAL.

Display Design: Balancing Merchandising and Risk

Effective display design should never come at the expense of safety or visibility.

High-risk items should be:

- Positioned in high-visibility zones
- Integrated into displays near staffed areas
- Designed to limit concealment opportunities

Modular, transparent, and well-spaced displays support both security and

merchandising goals. They allow for flexibility while maintaining open sightlines, a win for loss prevention and visual appeal.

ATM Placement: An Often-Overlooked Risk

One of the most frequently overlooked elements in retail security design is the placement of ATMs.

Avoiding Drive-Through and Smash-and-Grab Risks

ATMs located near exterior walls, windows, or drive-through lanes present significant risk. These placements can expose retailers to:

- Vehicle-ramming thefts
 - Overnight break-ins
 - Increased liability and repair costs
- Best practices for ATM placement include:
- Locating ATMs away from exterior walls
 - Ensuring strong natural surveillance from staffed areas
 - Avoiding direct line-of-sight access from outside
 - Using physical barriers or design features that prevent vehicle access

Proper ATM placement protects assets while reducing disruption and reputational

damage following incidents.

Designing for the Future: Security as a Sales Strategy

Retailers who treat security as an afterthought often pay for it twice, once in losses and again in lost customer trust. Conversely, organizations that integrate security into store design create environments that feel safer, perform better, and support long-term growth.

Effective store design is not about hardening spaces – it's about designing crime out while designing success in.

By applying CPTED principles, strategically locating the point of sale, designing smart displays, and addressing overlooked risks like ATM placement, retailers can create stores that are safer for employees, more welcoming for customers, and more profitable for the business.

In the end, good design doesn't just protect assets, it protects people, strengthens brands, and drives the bottom line. **■**

Sean Sportun, is a community safety advocate and has served on the volunteer Toronto Crime Stoppers Board of Directors since 2002, currently serving as chair. Over the past two decades, he has led award-winning initiatives in Canada and internationally, addressing complex crime issues including human trafficking, illegal firearms, hate crimes, illicit trade, and organized retail crime. Sean is a graduate with honours from Seneca College's Law Enforcement Program and holds leadership credentials from Queen's University and Harvard University, along with advanced certifications in crime prevention and situational awareness. He is an associate member of the Canadian Association of Chiefs of Police, serving on both the Crime Prevention, Community Safety & Well-being and Private Sector Liaison Committees.

Professionally, Sean brings more than 30 years of experience in the corporate security and retail industry and has received numerous national and international honours, including the Sovereign's Medal for Volunteers, recognition as IFSEC Global's #1 Top Influencer, Retail Council of Canada's Inaugural Legends Award and multiple humanitarian and industry leadership awards. His innovative approach to crime prevention has also been featured in two Harvard Business School case studies.

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- ✓ Proven high-turn combinations



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Your Trial & Travel Section Is Probably Worth More Than You Think

When was the last time you really looked at your trial and travel section? Not walked past it. Not glanced at it. Actually looked at it.

Most convenience operators I talk to are dialed in on fuel margins, beverage rotations, tobacco pricing, and front counter confection. Rightfully so. But the trial and travel section?

It's usually just... there.

- A few items, some strong brands. A couple empty hooks.
- And lots of inventory that hasn't moved in a while.
- And that's where opportunity quietly goes to die.

You're extremely busy, and we get it - you don't have the bandwidth to think about travel-sized products, and you shouldn't have to. Here's what I've learned after

working in this category for over a decade:

Trial and Travel isn't a "miscellaneous" section. It's one of the most predictable impulse categories in the store. Customers don't buy trial and travel randomly, they buy because:

- They forgot something.
- They're heading somewhere.
- They need a quick solution.
- They recognize the brand.
- The price feels easy.

It's low-risk, high-convenience buying.

But when the section looks inconsistent, half empty, cluttered and random – the buying slows down. Not because they don't want the product, but because the presentation doesn't make it easy.

At Big Brands, this is all we focus on: Trial, travel and impulse programs for Canadian

retailers. We work directly with major manufacturers to curate the SKU's that sell consistently.

National banners like 7-Eleven, Circle K, Couche-Tard, Petro Canada and Shell have already made the shift to our Gravity Pack program. Not because it's flashy, but **because it's structured, and it works.**

When you display your travel program in Gravity Packs the section looks tighter, it stays organized and it's easier to reorder. The product assortment feels intentional instead of random. And that **consistency compounds into strong category sales.**

Gravity Packs keep your products facing forward and eliminates cluttered displays. It creates clean vertical organization, and the best part is that it's available from all major distributors. Core-Mark, Sobeyes Wholesale and 7-Eleven Distribution all stock a wide range of Gravity Packed trial and travel products.

We put together a **Distributor Order Guide** that shows the full assortment of trial and travel national brands available through your preferred distributor and how to build a clean, high-performing trial and travel section.

If you're going to dedicate space in your store to trial and travel anyway, it might as well work harder for you.



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EQUIPMENT OPTIONS THAT HEAT UP BEVERAGE SALES

BY ANGELA ALTASS



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“HOT BEVERAGE TECHNOLOGY HAS ADVANCED FROM BASIC BREWERS TO AUTOMATED SYSTEMS THAT MEET TODAY’S SPECIALTY COFFEE EXPECTATIONS”

Gage Johnston, product marketing and market insights manager, Franke Coffee Systems.

Hot beverage equipment has evolved beyond basic automatic drip coffee brewers to automated and advanced technology that can deliver café-quality beverages in any setting with minimal effort.

“Hot beverage technology has advanced from basic brewers to automated systems that meet today’s specialty coffee expectations,” says Gage Johnston, product marketing and market insights manager, Franke Coffee Systems.

Technology focus is shifting from machines to platforms, configurable menus, guided workflows, and features that reduce training burden while protecting in-cup consistency, says Michael Cheung, president, TFI Food Equipment Solutions.

“New pay-at-machine card tap systems are here with integration to large Canadian payment systems like Moneris and capacity to run captive payment cards such as student cards,” says Cheung. “From manual to automated consistency, modern systems offer complete recipe control, automated dosing, and extraction management to reduce operator variability.”

A successful hot beverage lineup should include brewed coffee, espresso-based drinks, hot chocolate, and seasonal specialties, notes Johnston. For Canadian convenience stores, it is important to offer dependable everyday favourites while also providing options that appeal to customers seeking new flavours or indulgent treats, he says, noting that flavoured and specialty beverages are continuing to gain traction, especially among younger consumers.

“With 60 per cent of Canadians purchasing coffee away from home, convenience stores now rely on precision grinders, programmable interfaces, and connected platforms to replicate café-level beverages.” >>



says Johnston. “These innovations support the growing demand for personalization, especially among Gen Z, where 52 per cent prefer flavoured coffee, allowing retailers to adapt quickly to emerging trends.”

Convenience store owners should choose equipment that aligns with their business goals, considering beverage volume, staffing, menu variety, and customer expectations, says Johnston.

“With 90 per cent of Canadians drinking coffee monthly and 58 per cent demanding both affordability and superior taste, equipment must deliver consistent, high-quality results at speed,” says Johnston. “Because 74 per cent of Canadians prefer the same coffee every day, reliability and repeatability are essential, while flexible menus help satisfy the 58 per cent who also want some variety.”

Stores benefit from equipment that offers easy cleaning processes, one-touch beverage selection, and remote monitoring, states Johnston. Connected technology enables remote performance monitoring, beverage tracking, and proactive maintenance.

Also important is a correctly designed counter presentation that is inviting to the customer with cups in logical position, clear menu boards, and carefully designed graphic user instructions, says Cheung.

“Modular platforms and advanced systems give operators expanded menu flexibility without increasing

labour or counter space,” says Johnston. “For example, a machine that delivers both iced and hot beverages from a single platform supports the growing demand for all-day versatility in the convenience channel.”

Customers are increasingly comfortable with self-serve hot beverage equipment, if it delivers speed, customization, and a consistently high-quality experience, says Johnston, while Cheung notes that self-serve has gone from “cheap coffee fast” to “fast coffee that’s actually good.” Self-serve operational safety is vital, adds Cheung, with features that include cup sensor dispenser control, drip management, and easy-to-wipe-down surfaces.

Operators should prioritize ease of use in a self-serve environment, with flexibility to serve both hot and iced beverages, low labour and maintenance requirements, and reliability, says Amy Brown, marketing manager, SEB Professional. The right equipment can elevate the perception of a store from simply a quick stop to being known as a coffee destination, she states.

“In convenience stores, customers expect an intuitive interface, quick beverage preparation, and options that reflect coffee shop standards,” says Johnston. “Cleanliness and well-maintained machines are essential, as the self-serve area often shapes a shopper’s perception of overall store quality. When these expectations are met, self-serve becomes a strong driver of

“90 PER CENT OF CANADIANS DRINK COFFEE MONTHLY AND 58 PER CENT DEMAND BOTH AFFORDABILITY AND SUPERIOR TASTE—EQUIPMENT MUST DELIVER CONSISTENT, HIGH-QUALITY RESULTS AT SPEED.”



“NEARLY 78 PER CENT OF CONSUMERS SAY THEY ARE MORE LIKELY TO VISIT IF THEY KNOW THE COFFEE IS FRESH AND HIGH QUALITY.”

repeat visits and customer loyalty.”

Today’s automated systems handle most beverage preparation, leaving staff free to focus on cleaning routines, customer support, and basic troubleshooting, states Johnston.

“Well trained employees protect beverage consistency and machine health,” he notes. “Consistent maintenance is key to protecting beverage quality, maximizing uptime, and extending equipment lifespan. Routine cleaning and scheduled preventative service help maintain optimal taste and temperature, reduce unexpected breakdowns, and ensure food safety compliance.”

Poor maintenance can impact coffee’s flavour as well as machine consistency and reliability, which ultimately damage repeat visits, states Brown.

“Ultimately, a machine is only as good as its maintenance where strong upkeep directly improves ROI and preserves the coffee experience that builds long-term customer loyalty,” remarks Johnston.

Regular machine maintenance is non-negotiable, says Cheung, noting it impacts four things:

- Taste: Old oils, residue, and scale change flavour.
- Food safety and hygiene: Especially for a milk system.
- Uptime: Cleaning prevents clogs, sensor faults, and brewer errors
- Lifecycle cost: Preventable failures are expensive ones.

As operators increasingly look to grow prepared beverage sales, with 58 per cent expecting beverages to become more important to their businesses in the next two years, equipment that delivers premium quality with minimal operational complexity is more important than ever, says Brown.

“Convenience stores now have some of the highest coffee purchase frequencies across foodservice,” says Brown. “Nearly 78 per cent of consumers say they are more likely to visit if they know the coffee is fresh and high quality. That means your equipment must consistently deliver quality, freshness, and speed.”



Hot beverage equipment has evolved from batch brewing to fully automated beverage platforms that support customization, premium quality, and operational efficiency, says Brown.

“Today’s systems automate cleaning, offer touchscreen interfaces for intuitive self-serve use, support speciality beverages like espresso-based drinks and iced formats, and even provide telemetry and remote monitoring in some cases,” she says. “Consumers are looking for more customization and premium quality while operators are managing tighter labour constraints. Equipment now needs to support both.”

Consumers agree that convenience stores are just as capable of delivering quality coffee as coffee shops, but they want freshness, clean beverage areas, customization options, speed and value, states Brown.

“Coffee is a daily ritual, and consumers expect consistency wherever they purchase it,” she says, “Investing in equipment that supports both core classics and premium options positions stores for long-term growth.”



C-store beverage is increasingly expected to rival coffee shops with seasonal, limited-time-offer flavourings and customization, says Michael Cheung, president, TFI Food Equipment Solutions. He offers the following advice for choosing hot beverage equipment:

Throughput and daypart reality: Peak 30–60-minute rush? You want a system designed for fast dispensing, minimal intervention and proven user interface. Drink dispenser times must be fast, typically 30 seconds or less.

Menu strategy: Decide if you're "great drip coffee + a few favourites," vs "coffeehouse menu." NACS reporting shows c-store coffee is moving toward higher quality, personalization, and seasonal variety.

Footprint + utilities: For tighter counters, use machines designed specifically for space-limited sites.

Labour and training: Favour equipment with guided cleaning, on-screen prompts, recipe locking, and minimal barista-quality milk options on a self-serve platform.

Service: Choose a partner that can deliver installation standards, water strategy, preventative maintenance cadence, and service level agreement (SLA) response.



Amy Brown, marketing manager, SEB Professional, recommends the following hot beverage equipment features for convenience stores, based on consumer and operator insights:

Automated cleaning systems: Labour remains one of the largest operator challenges. Automation reduces staff burden and ensures hygiene compliance.

Bean-to-cup technology: Twenty-eight per cent of consumers express interest in bean-to-cup systems, reflecting growing expectations for freshness and quality.

Customization capability: Consumers gravitate to options that best meet their needs, and the right equipment can help c-stores serve the high-quality customers crave.

Hot and cold versatility: Cold and iced formats continue to gain popularity, making systems that can produce both hot and iced formats valuable. **C**

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BY ELIE Y. KATZ

CASH ADVANCE FUNDING: ARE YOU ELIGIBLE? A GUIDE FOR SMALL BUSINESS OWNERS

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Elie Y. Katz is the president and CEO of National Retail Solutions (NRS), which operates thousands of point-of-sale terminals across the United States and Canada, offering NRS Pay credit card processing and business cash advance funding to small and mid-sized independent retailers. For more information, visit nrsplus.com or call (888) 541-1073 Elie



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BY MELINE BEACH

TURNING WASHES INTO RELATIONSHIPS: HOW LOYALTY PROGRAMS ARE RESHAPING THE CARWASH INDUSTRY

For decades, the carwash industry was highly transactional and business was weather-dependent. Today, subscription models have reshaped the industry in an effort to create a loyal customer base and offer predictable monthly revenue as a year-round business.

According to an IBISWorld, the Canadian carwash and auto detailing industry generated around \$1.5 billion in revenue in 2025, growing at roughly one per cent annually over the last five years.

While this growth rate illustrates scale and opportunity, loyalty programs is a central driving force for success.

Value and Routine

Northern Lights Carwash is an independently owned, Manitoba company with over a decade of experience in the industry. They take pride on being the province's "most technologically advanced carwash" and feature a carwash club with a loyal customer base. It's not just a feature, it's their foundation driven by convenience.

"As an express exterior wash in a competitive market, we know we can compete on both speed and convenience," says Tom van der Breggen, manager of Northern Lights Carwash. "We offer three monthly unlimited membership tiers designed to suit different

customer preferences and vehicle care priorities."

The three tiers: The Quality, featuring soap application, underbody flush, and a nine-blower dry; The Great, featuring everything in The Quality, plus undercarriage wash, three-step wheel cleaning, Rainbow Coat protectant, and an 18-blower dry; and the premium package The Works, featuring everything in The Great, plus rust protection, Red Hot Lava foam, hot wax, Ceramic Tru Pearl, and graphene coating.

"Each tier is designed to offer clear value progression, allowing customers to choose the level of protection and finish that best fits their needs," says van der Breggen. "All members also receive access to complimentary on-site amenities, including high-powered vacuums, drying towels, and a self-serve mat washing station.

According to van der Breggen, these added services enhance the overall value of the membership and contribute to a more complete vehicle care experience, stressing that value comes before loyalty.

"We believe loyalty begins with the value of the wash and the experience you create," says van der Breggen. "If you don't have a great product and great customer service, >>

you won't get loyalty either way. If you can provide the value, that is where the loyalty grows single wash customers into members."

Convenience brings customers in, but consistency and experience keep them coming back.

"By combining speed of wash with a simple unlimited membership model, we position car washing as part of a customer's routine rather than an occasional chore," says van der Breggen. "Members can wash their vehicle on their way to work, during a lunch break, before a meeting, or anytime they are driving by. That convenience, paired with consistent quality, is what builds long-term retention."

Predictable Revenue

Town Wash Holdings operates numerous carwashes in the United States under the brands Sud's Factory Car Wash and Drip Drop Car Wash, both of which offer membership and single-wash options. For Sud's Factory, customers can choose from four unlimited membership tiers ranging from basic to ceramic. Drip Drop offers three unlimited options, with both brands noting that two visits per month covers the cost of membership.

According to Charlotte O'Connor, membership and sales manager at Town Wash Holdings LLC, the move to membership was driven by financial security.

"We operate a membership-based model with unlimited washes and free vacuums for a monthly fee," says O'Connor, who notes their non-contractual, month-to-month

approach with no sign-up or cancellation fee builds significant customer loyalty. "Membership provides a predictable, steady stream of monthly income, which offers far more stability than relying solely on non-member traffic."

Once a membership is sold, customer activity may vary. O'Connor notes that about one-third of their members visit three to five times per month, while the remaining two-thirds visit one to three times or not at all in a given month. That lower-frequency activity works in the operator's favour as fewer visits mean less soap, water and labour consumed, while monthly revenue remains intact. While non-members may generally pay more per visit, O'Connor adds that there are still upselling opportunities for members, such as wax, tire sheen and ceramic coating, which adds incremental revenue on top of the base membership fee.

Subscription models also play a stabilizing role in an industry where seasons heavily influence how often customers visit. In colder months, road salt and slush tend to drive more frequent washes, while milder seasons may see a dip in traffic. By locking in a flat monthly fee, operators can secure a predictable revenue stream that holds steady regardless of weather patterns or seasonal slowdowns, which help smooth out the peaks and valleys that have traditionally made cash flow harder to manage.

Technology

Securing that revenue requires the

right tools to manage it. Today's loyalty programs are beyond punch cards. The investment required depends largely on how sophisticated an operator wants the program to be. Modern programs use technology to automate the customer experience, from mobile apps and automatic billing to licence plate recognition (LPR).

"At Northern Lights, our membership platform is fully digital to create the most convenient experience for our customers," says van der Breggen. Members manage everything from sign up, upgrade, downgrade, and pause to canceling or updating their vehicle information using an app integrated directly with the company's POS system and LPR cameras, all without staff intervention. "When they arrive, the system scans the plate, opens the gate, and grants access automatically, signalling which wash package that member should be receiving."

The integration of digital tools has become the norm for membership management, enabling seamless entry, billing and marketing across a member base. Costs can include software subscriptions and credit card processing fees, in addition to operating expenses.

"That said, a membership program does not need to start at this level of sophistication," says van der Breggen.

O'Connor adds that beyond technology, success also depends on a staff's selling skills; marketing with proper signage, posters, and handouts detailing membership packages; and internal management, citing that



BY COMBINING SPEED OF WASH WITH A SIMPLE UNLIMITED MEMBERSHIP MODEL, WE POSITION CAR WASHING AS PART OF A CUSTOMER'S ROUTINE RATHER THAN AN OCCASIONAL CHORE.



third-party companies or CRM services may charge a fee (up to 10 per cent of monthly membership income). “The investment is highly worthwhile as the predictable income far outweighs the expenses,” she says.

Neither van der Breggen nor O’Connor suggest that operators need sophisticated systems at launch. Van der Breggen suggests that many programs can start simple with manual tracking to gauge customer demand before scaling technology.

Customer Experience

One of the most common challenges with a membership program is around commitment and pricing.

“One key decision we made was to avoid fixed contracts,” says van der Breggen. “Members can pause, cancel, upgrade, or downgrade at any time. That flexibility removes a common friction point and significantly reduces dissatisfaction. When customers feel in control, complaints decrease dramatically.”

Van der Breggen adds that customer education has been a primary challenge. “While our digital system is efficient, not all customers are comfortable with app-based enrollment. We found that walking customers through the setup during signup greatly reduces future frustration. Once properly onboarded, members become highly self-sufficient. Technology works best when paired with strong customer service.”

O’Connor agrees. Beyond the odd technical glitch due to internet outages or LPR errors, the main challenge is the staff learning curve. She says, “Attendants must be trained on a ‘perfect pitch’ to sign customers up quickly.”

Unlike anonymous retail transactions, membership programs offer operators insight on frequency, wash preferences and seasonal behaviour that can inform pricing and service enhancements. A well-run loyalty program can also generate valuable, genuine engagement.

“One of the most valuable benefits has been developing a large base of engaged regulars,” says van der Breggen. “The membership base has become an ongoing feedback loop that helps us refine operations and address small issues before they become larger problems.”

O’Connor adds, “The most beneficial feedback is the positive affirmation from members regarding the value and convenience of the service. We also use these interactions to encourage Google reviews, which serves as a powerful marketing tool to drive new business.”

Membership programs are rapidly becoming industry standard, highly recommended by both van der Breggen and O’Connor.

“I would never own a carwash without a membership program,” says O’Connor. “My advice is to research similar washes on social media and professional forums to see what platforms work best for their specific scale.”

Van der Breggen offers a measured perspective: “Your profit per wash may go down

but if you are confident in your ability to continually provide an exceptional experience to grow your customer base it can be successful. With exceptional product quality, speed and customer service, membership becomes a natural extension of your business that can create sustainable growth.”

Meline Beach is a Toronto-based communications practitioner and frequent contributor to Convenience and Carwash Canada. In addition to freelance writing, Meline provides communications and public relations support to businesses across Canada. She can be reached at www.mlbcomms.ca.

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CUTTING OPERATIONAL EXPENSES WITHOUT CUTTING CORNERS: PROACTIVE STRATEGIES TO CONTROL WATER, POWER AND CHEMICAL COSTS



BY: SCOTT FRIEDMAN

Every carwash operator has the same goal: Deliver clean, shiny and dry cars that keep customers coming back. However, consistently hitting that mark – without letting operational costs spiral out of control – is where the real challenge lies.

Doing so requires constant attention to the most significant levers of profitability in your wash: Chemicals, water and high-performing equipment. In today's increasingly competitive market, effectively navigating these expenses is essential for delivering a complete wash experience that drives customer retention and boosts your bottom line.

But there are also several ways to save.

While carwash operators cannot negotiate certain – and often rising – costs, there are opportunities to reduce the expenses you can control without compromising uptime, wash quality, or customer satisfaction. This can help mitigate increases in other expenditures, keep your bays running at peak performance and ultimately help your bottom line.

Managing Your Chemical Costs

For most sites, the three highest operational expenses are chemistry,

water and electricity, although these can vary by carwash type and geography. Tunnel washes, for example, typically have lower per-car costs on consumables due to volume and automation; however, these figures fluctuate depending on the wash package. For instance, a basic tunnel wash normally uses fewer gallons of water per car than higher-level wash packages.

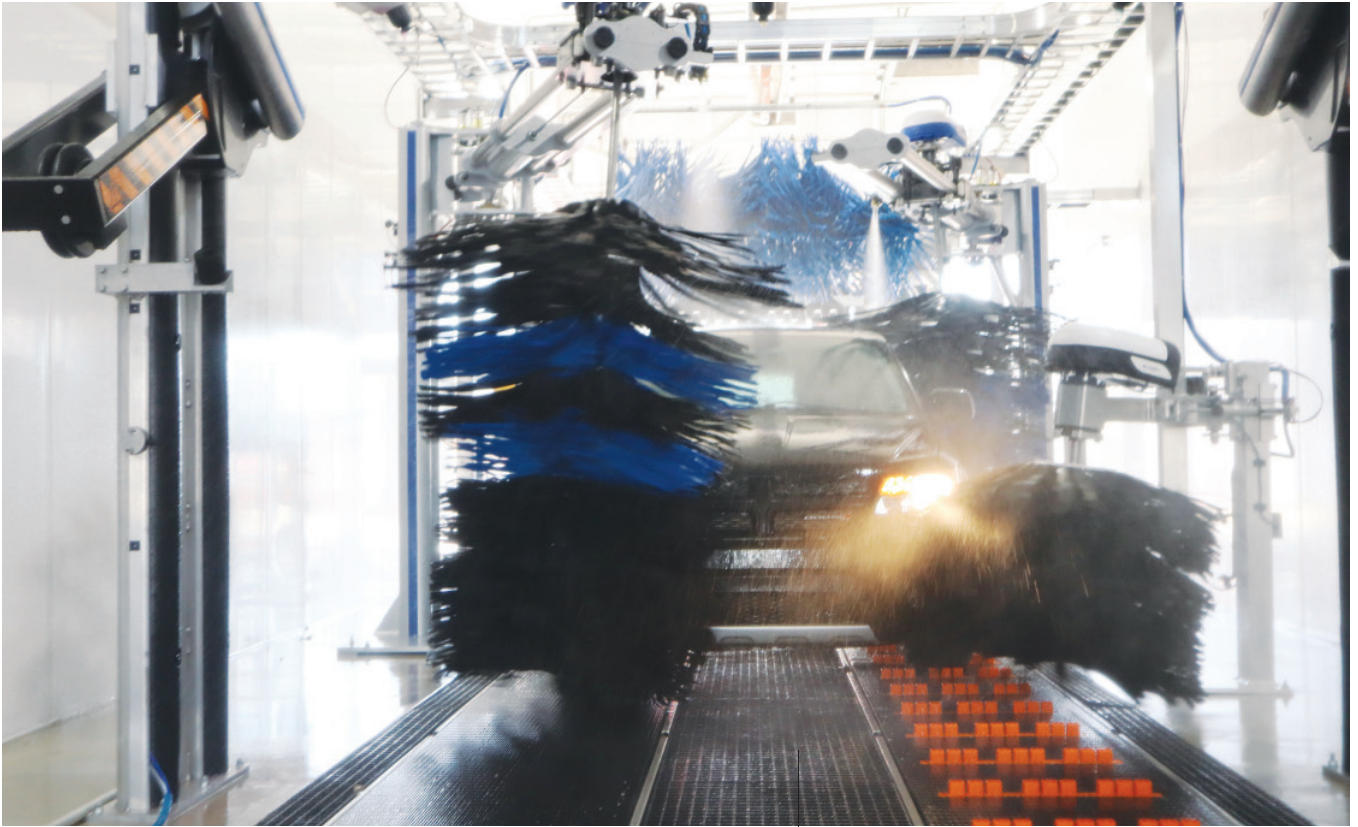
But when you examine the individual cost-per-car averages* the importance of managing your chemicals – the most controllable of these consumables – becomes apparent:

Water: \$0.40-\$1.80+ per car (if not using reclamation)

Electricity: \$0.50-\$1.00 per car

Chemicals: \$0.40-\$1.25 per car

For Illustrative Purposes Only Benchmark averages that fluctuate based on regional utility rates, equipment efficiency, volumes and wash packages



**CONVEYORS
ARE THE
BACKBONE OF
ANY TUNNEL
SYSTEM.**

“The chemicals in your wash packages are the key recurring consumables for operations because the selection is more dynamic than other variable costs,” said Mack Ewing, senior director, sales and marketing, OPW VWS. “Therefore, knowing the chemical cost-per-car is a powerful metric that can drive profitability because it’s under operator control.”

This starts with clarity. Operators must know what chemicals are being applied, in what volume and the features per package. When you understand the specific type and amount of chemicals used in each application

of your wash packages, you can choose which products to invest more in (or less). This also helps you plan and define upgrades and new offerings, such as ceramic soaps or graphene coatings, because the optionality makes it easier to adjust your mid-to-high-level wash packages that have more services.

“Having these product-by-product insights provides a more flexible approach to configuring and operating the wash as intended,” Ewing said. “It also minimizes the risk of misapplying the chemicals for a given package.”

Monitoring equipment performance is another key factor in managing chemical costs.

High-quality, well-functioning systems help optimize the efficiency of your chemical usage because the equipment automatically applies the right amount of chemical per wash. This underscores the importance of preventative maintenance for cost savings.

Work with Suppliers and Distributors to Audit Your Resource Usage

Taking stock of your chemicals and delivery systems is always a good practice. Cycle counting and/or utilizing inventory software are a good start. You can also perform an internal audit with visual inventory inspections and basic usage tracking.

But applying a more thorough analysis can deliver cost-saving results.

First, consider how often your chemical supplier walks through your site with you. Partnering with a >>

trusted distributor or supplier for routine audits doesn't just fine tune your cost-per-car, it can uncover waste you didn't even know was there.

"The right supplier or distributor should perform volumetric audits of your chemicals to help determine your actual cost per package," Ewing said.

Beyond just the numbers that impact product purchasing decisions, this analysis can provide you with more options to modify your wash packages to optimize expenses.

"The results are often surprising. For example, a thorough chemical audit could reveal that your bottom-level package, while affordable for the consumer, is using more or less chemistry than is needed. That would reduce the package's profitability and doesn't provide the best value to the customer."

It is also important to foster strong relationships with your distributors and suppliers.

"A strong relationship with your chemical distributor allows you to rely on them for transparent information about cost-per-car,

UNPLANNED DOWNTIME DOESN'T JUST THROW OFF YOUR SCHEDULE – IT CAN COST YOU HUNDREDS, EVEN THOUSANDS, IN LOST REVENUE AND REPAIRS.

package inefficiencies, proper dosing and even equipment calibration," Ewing said. "Additionally, work with them to find a good cadence for regular site visits, increasing frequency at new sites or as seasons change."

Proactively assessing your chemical product volumes according to need can enhance efficiency and drive additional savings in both the short and long term.

Avoid Costly Downtime with Preventive Equipment Maintenance

You know what they say about an ounce of prevention? Well, it also applies to cost savings for carwash operations.

Unplanned downtime doesn't just throw off your schedule – it can cost you hundreds, even thousands, in lost revenue and repairs. That's why preventive maintenance on key components, such as conveyors, washers, chemical delivery systems and especially the air system, is not a "nice-to-have." It's your first line of defense against waste, equipment failure and frustrated customers.

Failing to perform routine maintenance

can lead to several avoidable issues:

- Dirty and cluttered wash bay
- Waste of expensive chemicals and water
- Buildup of harmful contaminants, mold and bacteria
- Problems with the air system
- Premature parts corrosion and rust
- Wear and damage to conveyor belts, bearings and wash equipment
- Higher power usage
- Increased downtime
- Diminished customer experience

More often than not, these and other common equipment problems in wash tunnels can be minimized or prevented altogether with a stringent maintenance routine. A good practice is to create a basic checklist for the on-site staff to follow, which can be optimized with a two-pronged approach.

First, follow the manufacturer's recommendations and specs for general maintenance on the wash equipment itself. Then, support the manufacturer's guidelines with your own checklist that outlines daily, weekly and monthly tasks your staff can perform in and around the facility, paying extra attention to the conveyor.

"Conveyors are the backbone of any tunnel system," said Jim Ferguson, manager, sales ops, aftermarket and tech support at Belanger. "If that goes down, there's no way to pull a car through, so the whole bay shuts down — and every minute of downtime costs you revenue and damages the customer experience. That's why conveyor maintenance is so critical. It's not just about keeping things moving; it's about ensuring reliability, throughput and safety."

It is best to run through the list either before you begin operations for the day or after business hours. Some of these basic tasks should include:

- Daily and nightly visual inspections of the tunnel and wash system
- Wash down the bay and equipment, especially the conveyor
- Check for any loose wires or air lines
- Grease all bearings
- Keep the conveyor, floor and drains free of debris

Keeping your site clean and organized and creating a detailed preventative maintenance plan for your wash bay, goes a long way toward delivering consistency, both with equipment performance and overall wash quality.

That consistency is what helps reduce expenses for power, water and chemicals, and



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avoid costly downtime, while still providing a quality wash experience. To that end, operations are increasingly implementing wash management systems that provide real-time data and visibility as part of their preventative maintenance programs. New technologies have emerged that monitor water pressure, chemical levels, motor performance and more to help the site operate with greater efficiency and deliver a competitive advantage.

“People simply want a clean, dry car, and preventive maintenance helps deliver that,” Ferguson said. “If you’re not staying ahead of maintenance issues, you’re creating gaps in the customer experience. And when customers start to question the quality or reliability of your wash, you’re giving them an opportunity to go elsewhere. In this industry, consistency is key. Protect your reputation by keeping your equipment running at its best.”

Reclaim Your Water for More Savings and a Better Customer Experience

Carwashes have water and chemicals continually flowing through them during operation. When combined with the dirt, grease and debris they wash away from vehicles, some issues can arise, often manifesting in a slick, slimy surface and a moldy stench in the wash bay.

These are indicative of a problem and can be off-putting to customers. Fortunately, there is a solution.

Effective water reclamation is a key element in preventative maintenance and optimizing your site’s performance, as it slows down premature rust and corrosion on equipment. It also helps improve water quality and drive customer satisfaction – and it’s a cost saver, too.

While it is not mandated everywhere, water reclamation provides several benefits to operations:

- Keeps water moving to avoid stagnation
- Inhibits mold and bacteria growth
- Reduces bad odors
- Cuts new water expenses
- Water can be filtered and reused
- Helps your facility meet local regulations
- Improves the customer experience
- Sustainable, eco-friendly practice

Conclusion

While you can’t control every cost, you can optimize – and save – on your expenses. By building strong partnerships with your suppliers, monitoring your chemical and water usage, and incorporating a preventive maintenance program into your daily operations, you’ll not only protect your bottom line – you’ll also elevate the entire customer experience. A well-tuned, efficient wash is a profitable one. And when your customers consistently drive away impressed, that’s when savings truly turn to growth. **■**

Scott Friedman is the director of marketing at OPW Vehicle Wash Solutions. OPW Vehicle Wash Solutions was formed in January 2019 and consists of PDQ Manufacturing, Inc., Belanger, Inc., Innovative Control Systems (ICS), Kesseltronics and Transchem. PDQ is a provider of in-bay automatic wash systems and payment terminals, while Belanger is a leader in soft-touch tunnel and in-bay automatic wash systems. ICS provides carwash technology, like payment terminals, process controls and software management and automation systems, and Kesseltronics designs machine controls for successful tunnel wash operation. Transchem is a developer of environmentally sensitive vehicle wash chemicals and cleaning products. For more information on OPW Vehicle Wash Solutions, visit opwvws.com.



THE REAL COST OF RETAIL THEFT

By **Linda Buckton & Gina Seitz**

From inventory shrinkage to insurance costs, the financial impact of theft is often bigger than most retailers expect.

Retail theft is often thought of as a big-box problem. In reality, small and mid-sized businesses often feel the impact more quickly—and more painfully.

A few missing items each week may not seem like much. But over time, those small losses add up, quietly eating into margins and creating operational strain.

For businesses already managing tight budgets, theft isn't just frustrating; it can become a serious financial risk.

Looking Beyond the Price Tag

The real cost of theft goes far beyond the value of what's taken.

Lost inventory affects revenue immediately, but there are often other consequences: Time spent investigating discrepancies, investments in additional security, and in some cases, increased insurance costs after a claim. Repeated incidents can also affect

employee morale, especially when staff feel responsible for monitoring theft while still serving customers.

In many cases, the indirect costs end up exceeding the value of the stolen merchandise itself.

Common Types of Retail Theft

Retail theft takes many forms, some more visible than others.

Shoplifting: The most familiar type of theft. Concealed merchandise, price switching, or simply walking out with items may seem minor in isolation, but frequent incidents can lead to significant annual losses.

Employee Theft: Internal theft is often less visible but can be more costly. This may involve taking merchandise, manipulating refunds, or under-ringing purchases. Because employees have access to inventory and systems, losses can continue for long

periods before being detected.

Organized Retail Crime: Some businesses are seeing coordinated theft carried out by groups targeting products that are easy to resell. These incidents can result in large losses in a very short time.

Return and Refund Fraud: Fraudulent returns, altered receipts, and returning stolen merchandise for store credit are becoming more common, particularly where return policies are flexible.

Why Smaller Businesses Face Greater Risk

Larger retailers often have loss prevention teams and sophisticated systems in place. Smaller businesses typically operate with fewer staff and less formal oversight, which can make theft easier to carry out—and harder to detect.

Busy environments also play a role. When employees are focused on helping customers, monitoring activity becomes more difficult. Losses are often discovered only during inventory counts or financial reviews, sometimes weeks or months later.

Familiarity can also create blind spots. Long-time employees or regular customers may naturally receive less scrutiny, which can unintentionally create opportunities for theft.

IN MANY CASES, THE INDIRECT COSTS END UP EXCEEDING THE VALUE OF THE STOLEN MERCHANDISE ITSELF.

Practical Ways to Reduce Retail Theft

No business can eliminate theft entirely, but simple steps can make a meaningful difference.

Improve visibility: Clear sightlines and organized layouts make theft harder to conceal. Keeping high-value items in visible areas can act as a natural deterrent.

Use security measures strategically: Cameras, mirrors, and proper lighting discourage theft and can provide valuable documentation when incidents occur. Even visible signage can reduce risk.

Train employees: Staff are often the first line of defense. Training employees to recognize suspicious behavior or unusual refund patterns can help prevent losses early.

Strengthen procedures: Clear processes for handling cash, refunds, and inventory reduce opportunities for both internal and external theft. Regular inventory checks help identify issues sooner.

Build a culture of accountability: Employees are more likely to protect the business when expectations are clear and the workplace feels fair and supportive.

The Role of Insurance: Even with strong prevention measures, theft can still happen. Commercial property or crime insurance may help cover losses related to theft, vandalism, or employee dishonesty, depending on the policy.


However, not all coverage is the same. Limits, deductibles, and sub-limits on certain types of property can affect how much is recoverable after a loss. As inventory levels and operations change, it's worth reviewing coverage periodically to ensure it still reflects the business's current risk.

A quick annual conversation with your broker can often identify gaps before they become costly problems.

Staying Proactive: Retail theft continues to

evolve, particularly as organized retail crime and online resale markets grow. The most effective approach combines prevention, employee awareness, and financial protection.

Small improvements in layout, procedures, and training can significantly reduce risk over time. Planning ahead also ensures that if a loss does occur, the business is in a stronger position to recover.

Taking steps today can help protect your inventory, your employees, and your bottom line for the long term. 



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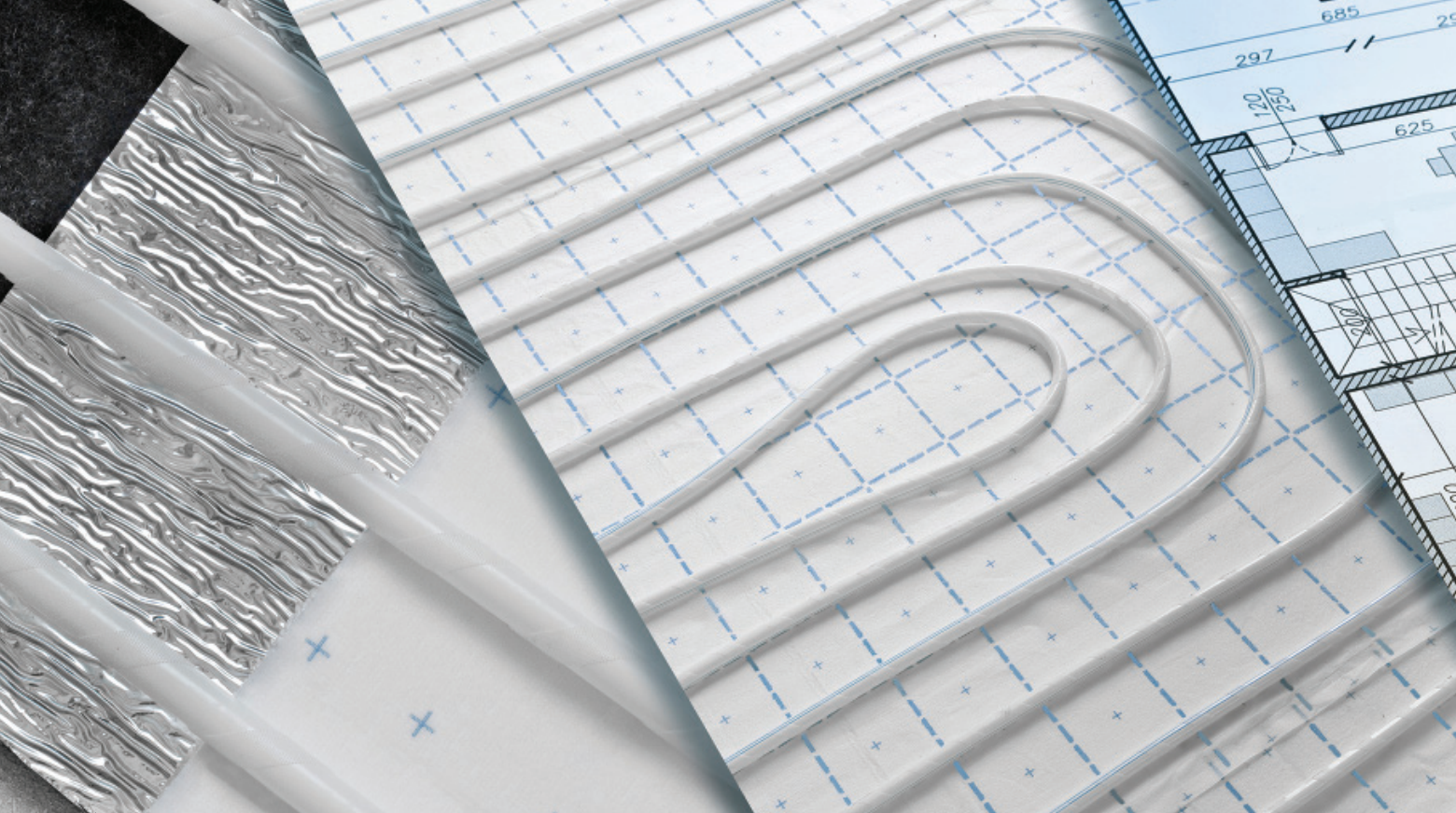
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BY AXEL FOLEY

IN-FLOOR HEATING IN CARWASHES: THE SYSTEM YOU NEVER SEE – BUT ALWAYS FEEL

In-floor heating is one of those systems customers rarely notice — unless it's missing. For operators in northern climates, it is not a luxury feature or a comfort upgrade. It is core infrastructure. In states across the Upper Midwest, Great Plains, Northeast, and into Canada, winter conditions can define whether a carwash runs efficiently or fights daily operational chaos.

For carwash professionals, particularly those operating in-bay automatics and self-serve locations, radiant floor heat directly impacts safety, throughput, chemical performance, structural longevity, and brand perception. When temperatures drop well below freezing for weeks at a time, the slab beneath your wash bays either works for you — or against you.

How In-Floor Heating Actually Works – A Crash Course

Most modern carwashes in the northern climates use in-floor heat. Before the concrete slab is poured, cross-linked PEX tubing is laid in carefully designed loops throughout the wash bay floors, mechanical rooms, exit aprons, entrance aprons and customer walkways. Typically, the colder the climate is, the closer the tubing is spaced together near entry doors, exit aprons, and trench drains, where ice formation is most likely.

A boiler heats water or a water-glycol mixture, and pumps circulate that heated fluid through the tubing embedded in the slab. Rather than heating air, the system warms the concrete itself. The slab then radiates heat upward, keeping the surface temperature above



Typical floor heat insulation begins at two inches thick or an R-10 thermal value. "Pink Board" is the most commonly used insulation for its high-density rating. This blanket of insulation is imperative as it keeps the heat from traveling downward into the soil and instead directs it upward into the concrete slab. As you move into more northern climates, it's not unusual to see insulation as thick as four inches being utilized.



This picture shows a typical layout of in-floor tubing before concrete is poured. Notice the spacing in the "loops" and how close the tubing is towards the entrance of this bay. Excessive water from undercarriage washing can lead to big issues if not prepared for properly. In proper installations the tubing will also be restrained with wire or plastic clips to keep the tubing from moving or floating toward the surface after concrete is poured.



At first glance, heating concrete outside the building can feel counterintuitive. It may even seem wasteful. But the entrance and exit aprons of a wash are where ice forms the fastest. In this context, exterior floor heat isn't about efficiency — it's about risk management. Sometimes the most cost-effective decision isn't the one that saves the most energy, but the one that prevents the most expensive problem.



**FOR OPERATORS
IN NORTHERN
CLIMATES, IT IS NOT
A LUXURY FEATURE
OR A COMFORT
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IT IS CORE
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freezing. Snow, slush, and standing water evaporate instead of turning into hazardous ice.

The key difference between forced air or radiant tube heating is thermal mass. With in-floor heating the concrete becomes a heat reservoir. Even when bay doors open repeatedly, quickly releasing the heated air, heated slabs retain warmth and recover bay heat quickly and efficiently. That stability is something forced air systems simply cannot provide.

Why Floor Heat is Essential in Northern Markets

In regions where winter stretches for four to six months, water management becomes a constant battle. Every vehicle entering the bay brings snow-packed wheel wells, ice clinging to undercarriages, and road salt dripping from frames. Add overspray and rinse water, and you have a perfect recipe for frozen floors.

Without in-floor heating, operators often rely on manual ice control methods or water weeping methods. Rock salt, calcium chloride, and labor-intensive scraping become part of daily routines. In instances using weep, constant water trickling through equipment quickly doubles or triples already increasing water costs. Not only does this create operational drag and inefficiency, but it also introduces corrosion risks to equipment, drains, and concrete. Over time, freeze-thaw cycles expand cracks, weaken slabs, and shorten the life of trench and drain systems.

From a liability standpoint, the risk multiplies. Slip-and-fall incidents become far more likely when wet concrete meets freezing air. In self-serve bays especially, customer exposure to potential injury is substantial. In a world where insurance premiums are already at an all-time high, limiting these claims is a must. Heated slabs dramatically reduce that risk by keeping surfaces consistently dry and slip free.

There is also the issue of uptime. Ice buildup can force temporary closures, slow vehicle throughput, freeze door tracks, and block drains. In many northern markets, winter is peak revenue season. Losing even a few cars per hour or closing temporarily due to icy conditions can quickly erode thousands of dollars in revenue over the course of a season.

Operational Advantages Beyond Ice Prevention

The most obvious benefit of in-floor heating is safety, but there are several secondary advantages.

First, throughput improves. Vehicles can enter and exit more smoothly when surfaces remain dry. Doors cycle more reliably when ice doesn't build up around thresholds. In-bay automatic operators, where efficiency per hour directly impacts profitability, often see measurable winter performance improvements with heated slabs.

Second, structural protection is significant. Concrete deteriorates rapidly under repeated freeze-thaw cycles and salt. Radiant heat reduces expansion stress inside the slab and limits long-term cracking. While the upfront cost is sometimes tough to swallow, the life-extension value can offset part of that investment over decades of operation. I have been to sites that are still operating with the same floor heating tubing from 30 years ago.

There is also a brand component. Even though your customers may not see your radiant heat, they notice clean, dry, professional-looking facilities. An icy, salted bay feels very different than one that appears safe, controlled and well maintained.

The Real Costs and Challenges

Despite its advantages, in-floor heating is not without drawbacks. Installation costs can add a substantial >>



WHEN TEMPERATURES DROP WELL BELOW FREEZING FOR WEEKS AT A TIME, THE SLAB BENEATH YOUR WASH BAYS EITHER WORKS FOR YOU — OR AGAINST YOU.

amount to a build budget, particularly in large footprints. Floor heating systems require boilers, pumps, controls, insulation beneath the slab, and thoughtful engineering. For retrofits, the expense often becomes prohibitive unless the slab is already being replaced.

Maintenance and repair present another challenge. Once the tubing is embedded in concrete, access is limited. Although PEX is durable and designed for longevity, installation errors, slab punctures during construction or equipment installation, or neglected fluid maintenance can create long-term problems. Leak detection may require thermal imaging, and repairs can involve cutting into the slab.

Energy consumption is another consideration. Boilers must run consistently during prolonged cold spells, particularly in climates where subzero temperatures persist. Poor system design, undersized boilers, lack of insulation beneath the slab, or improper zoning can dramatically increase operating costs. A poorly designed system may underperform while still consuming gas at high rates to the operator.

Design mistakes are particularly expensive because they are permanent. Tubing spaced too far apart will never deliver

adequate surface heat. Lack of insulation beneath the slab allows heat to dissipate into the ground. Inadequate glycol mixtures can introduce freeze risks within the tubing itself. For this reason, proper engineering and experienced installation are critical.

When Is It Worth the Investment?

In southern markets where freezing temperatures are rare and short-lived, in-floor heating may not provide meaningful return on investment. Short ice events can often be managed with alternative strategies.

In northern territories, however, it is often best viewed as essential infrastructure rather than an optional upgrade. For high-volume in-bay automatics and self-serve bays in the Midwest and beyond, radiant floor heat protects revenue, reduces liability exposure, improves operational stability, and extends structural lifespan.

Ultimately, winter reveals operational weaknesses. Drainage flaws, door design limitations, chemical inconsistencies, and equipment vulnerabilities all become more pronounced when temperatures plunge. Radiant floor heat does not eliminate winter challenges, but it removes one of the most disruptive variables: frozen surfaces.

For carwash professionals building new sites in cold climates, the conversation should not be whether radiant heat is needed. It should be whether the business can afford to operate without it.

When temperatures drop below zero and peak season is underway, your slab is either working with you — or working against you. So, while southern operators debate shade structures and water reclaim temperatures, northern operators know the truth: If your floor isn't heated, you're going to feel it — in your uptime, your liability, and your bottom line. **■**

Axel Foley has spent more than 13 years in the carwash industry, working alongside hundreds of owner-operators across the Midwest. His experience is deeply rooted in the midwestern market, where winter, equipment, chemistry, and throughput all collide. In 2024, Axel built his first personally owned site, Koala Wash, a three-bay in-bay automatic location in Omaha, NE. In late 2025, he and his partners launched Wash Force, a carwash distribution and service company supporting operators within a four-hour radius of Omaha with chemicals, equipment solutions, and hands-on service. Axel is passionate about helping owner-operators grow profitable, well-run operations and prides himself on being a steady, practical guide in an industry that never stops evolving. For more information call 515-661-3784 or email axel@washforceusa.com.



BY GRETCHEN MATTHEWS

DISCOVERING POWER AND POTENTIAL AT THE 12TH WOMEN IN CARWASH

There's nothing I love more than spending a few days in the company of like-minded women, learning and growing together. This atmosphere is super-charged with positive energy. By the time I left the 12th Women in Carwash conference, held in January in Clearwater, FL, at the Hilton Clearwater Resort & Spa, I was equipped and motivated to move forward again with confidence and vision.

Founded by Brenda Jane Johnstone in 2019, Women in Carwash is a bi-annual event empowering women in the carwash industry through expert presentations, hands-on workshops, networking, and its hallmark – an unforgettably fun dance party! This year's hilarious theme was 80s Prom. Every woman who wanted one was crowned, just like me, with a queen's tiara. Then we walked the red carpet in our extra-puffy dresses and danced the night away to Madonna, INXS, VanHalen, and Wham, pausing only to snap pics in the photo booth. Women In Carwash is a not-to-be-missed conference that promotes personal growth, supportive relationships, and a strong sense of community. >>

In Clearwater, the three-day speaker lineup boasted Women in Carwash newcomers and veterans. It always feels like their messages line up in a cosmic way and coalesce around a theme. This time, we were focusing on unlocking our potential – using the power within to become changemakers.

The Strong Keynote

Andrea Vetos of Mammoth Holdings kicked off the conference talking about Shine Factor. She had everyone in the room tell us what their win was in 2025 and we heard everything — jobs completed early, promotions, even the birth of a first child. Wins are reciprocal; as we celebrate the positive, our spirits are lifted, and we motivate those around us, so the wins keep coming. After her talk, we began our breakout sessions, moving from the power within to the power beyond.

Understanding Personal Power

Many of us never had a mentor to guide us in saving and investing, but Jenny Klismet's engaging workshop, "Understanding Personal Finances," offered practical, easy-to-follow advice for building financial security. She is the president/CEO at Fuel & Prosperity. Meanwhile, Connie Lee Bennett, psychologist and international speaker, helped participants overcome anxiety about

public speaking and stress management by teaching how to identify and address the root causes of fear, empowering us to deliver results with confidence.

Leveraging Our Strengths to Build Effective Teams

Diane Stafford, CEO of UpTalent Solutions, delivered interactive workshops focused on boosting self-awareness and leadership for better team communication. Carla Thompson-Shealy, director of HR at Caliber Car Wash, shared her expertise in building stronger alliances by fostering kindness, empathy, and shared perspectives. And Janae Warner, Unlimited Wash Club manager at Mammoth Holdings, emphasized that trust and mindset are essential to unlocking individual strengths and driving collective success in business.

Applying Creativity to Fuel Business Growth

A whole team of experienced professionals focused on ways we can change our thinking about the nuts of bolts of business in the 21st century. Mary Hale, consulting CFO for Strategic Accounting Unlimited, explained the analytics behind carwash operations. Jacqueline Goochs, a top international broker who helps her carwash clients buy, sell, and achieve 'build to suit' projects, explained key performance indicators (KPIs) and how they can revolutionize a business.

"TRUST AND MINDSET ARE ESSENTIAL TO UNLOCKING INDIVIDUAL STRENGTHS AND DRIVING COLLECTIVE SUCCESS IN BUSINESS."

Janae Warner, Mammoth Holdings

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In the world of branding and strategy, Carly Klein is a leader currently serving as director of marketing for El Car Wash. She taught that it's the emotional and psychological relationship between a company and its customers that fuels buy-in and amplifies growth. Senior Paychex PEO Services Representative Tiffany Cartwright taught us the value of transforming employees into brand ambassadors by integrating your company's internal culture with its external-facing image. Kayla Knudson, marketing coordinator at WashCard Systems, expanded this topic to share why B2B marketing is important and a trend worth adopting. On the flip side, when you're trying to reach your competitor's market, creating the right ads is critical. Mel Ohlinger, CEO of OhmCo, led a creative session on crafting eye-catching Facebook ads.

"WINS ARE RECIPROCAL; AS WE CELEBRATE THE POSITIVE, OUR SPIRITS ARE LIFTED, AND WE MOTIVATE THOSE AROUND US, SO THE WINS KEEP COMING."

Andrea Vetos, Mammoth Holdings

Developing Skills for Influence

We also examined some elements specific to the carwash industry. Jamilyn Bertsch, chief people officer at Express Carwash Equipment LLC in Kansas City and part-owner of Sudzy Salmon Car Wash in Alaska, helped us identify key safety issues and offered ways to tailor our safety training to industry-specific risks and regulations. Mary Hamilton, chemical technician for D&S Field Sales and Services provided actionable insights for owners and operators on equipment maintenance, water quality, chemistry fundamentals, and customizing wash recipes for vehicle types.

Using Our Business and Personal Power for Good

The closing speaker, Laura Equivel, is a dedicated advocate committed to eradicating sex trafficking. In her work for Atlas Free, she inspires individuals to step outside their comfort zones and use their emotional, mental, and professional resources to create a better world.

Every woman I met said the 12th Women in Carwash consistently met and exceeded her expectations. If you're a woman in this industry, attend one of our events. If you have, then, attend again! There's room for you in this amazing sisterhood of powerful women. **👩**

Gretchen Matthews is a freelance writer and speaker who has enjoyed the camaraderie of Women in Carwash seven times.



Applause and More Applause

Women in Carwash speakers deserve praise, but the accolades don't stop there. Women who attended in Clearwater had nothing but good things to say about the event as a whole.

The Women in Carwash Conference is a great opportunity for ladies from any aspect of the carwash industry to network for business, make new friends, and gain valuable insights not only for career and business success, but also for managing the hustle and bustle that comes with this field. The gathering offers a great balance of professional and personal development, and it's a lot of fun meeting new friends and alumni!

Patty Little, Event Coordinator/SEO Copywriter
Kleen-Rite Corp

Coming to the Women in Carwash Conference, I have learned so much. Seeing so many powerful women in a male-dominated industry brought me so much more confidence. Alongside that, I learned so much participating in each session.

Cheyenne Chadwell
Big Drip Auto Spa

It's definitely informative. And it's good to socialize with others who share the same passion.

Mallory Cushman
Woodies Wash Shack

This is my fourth or fifth time attending the conference, and the speakers are consistently outstanding. I always learn a great deal, and the event offers extensive opportunities for networking.

Laura Lusk
CSC Serviceworks



BY STEVE STEWART

SPRING STRESS TEST: WHY THE THAW IS A UST SYSTEM'S HARDEST SEASON AND WHAT FUEL RETAILERS CAN DO ABOUT IT

For many people all over the world, spring is a celebrated season of rebirth. Temperatures warm. Snow and ice retreat. The landscape finally turns green.

But for an underground storage tank (UST) system, this period is among the most volatile operating windows of the year, bringing a fundamental shift in the physical environment surrounding critical infrastructure.

As months of frozen precipitation melts, it creates an assault on UST equipment from every direction:

- Saturated with meltwater, the weight of the surrounding backfill increases
- Buoyancy created by the meltwater threatens unanchored tanks with low fuel levels
- A rising water table creates hydrostatic pressure

These conditions create a crushing force that acts like a high-pressure hose, forcing water into cracks and weakened seams. All of this seasonal stress to the UST system:

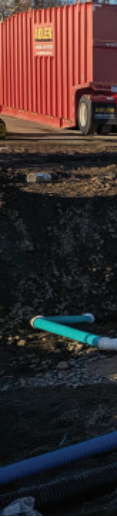
- Damages fueling system equipment
- Elevates the risk of an environmental release and unplanned downtime
- Leads to expensive service calls to replace or repair components
- Creates conditions inside the tank conducive to phase separation in ethanol blends
- Results in costly pump-outs, disposal and replacement of fuel-water mixtures
- Compromises brand reputation and customer confidence in the C-store's fueling operation
- Diverts site resources from managing core business operations

Turning the Tide on Seasonal Maintenance Liabilities

This environmental shift isn't just a regional liability. With nearly 60 per cent of the Northern Hemisphere's landmass undergoing a seasonal freeze-thaw cycle, the majority of the world's fueling infrastructure must endure a massive annual hydraulic event.

Fortunately, the petroleum equipment industry is undergoing an evolution of its own. Led by manufacturers such as OPW Retail Fueling, underground infrastructure maintenance is shifting from reactive repairs to proactive prevention. This strategic approach, which begins at the time of fueling system equipment acquisition, supports the "spring-ready" mindset necessary to safeguard UST assets during the thaw and lower the total

WITH NEARLY 60 PER CENT OF THE NORTHERN HEMISPHERE'S LANDMASS UNDERGOING A SEASONAL FREEZE-THAW CYCLE, THE MAJORITY OF THE WORLD'S FUELING INFRASTRUCTURE MUST ENDURE A MASSIVE ANNUAL HYDRAULIC EVENT.



cost of ownership over the life of the system. Translating a proactive strategy into an operational reality requires a focused evaluation of UST equipment design standards. To ensure infrastructure remains resilient against the pressures of the thaw, several design fundamentals must be prioritized during the selection process:



1. Seek out tank and dispenser sumps that reduce the number of penetration points and limit the number of field modifications — such as drilling holes — needed during the time of installation.

Selecting tank sumps equipped with factory-sealed conduit threads and integrated junction boxes eliminates the need for technician-drilled penetrations. Similarly, dispenser sumps designed with external sealed conduit channels that enter above the water table bypass the need for traditional entry fittings and provide extra protection against leak points.

2. Install UST components featuring highly engineered molding technology and watertight designs.

Modern multi-port spill containment manholes that provide spill containment for UST fill pipes and vapor-recovery risers are the first line of defense against surface meltwater. For example, a multi-port manhole with an integrated water shroud system is designed to completely isolate surface water and condensation from the tank sump. An injection-molded fiberglass water shroud lid mates to a standard tank sump top hat reducer. Shroud boots isolate the spill container buckets using stainless steel band clamps, which provide a tight seal between the water shroud top hat and the underside of the spill container mounting rings for superior prevention of water intrusion.

Tank sumps manufactured using Resin Transfer Molding (RTM) technology or Sheet-Molded Compound produce exceptionally smooth wall surfaces. Smooth sides bond more effectively to entry fittings and resist deflection, which prevents leaks. Additionally, consistently thick and smooth sealing surfaces optimize watertightness. Within the tank sump, advanced spill containers serve as a critical secondary barrier. Their double-wall design and sealable covers effectively neutralize the threat of water intrusion.

3. Choose fueling system components designed to withstand harsh operating conditions.

Part of preventing springtime headaches is ensuring reliable performance of fueling system equipment during winter. A rugged snowplow ring on a spill bucket can help prevent plow blades and heavy traffic from damaging the lid and spill bucket. Protecting >>

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When spring does arrive, the ground doesn't thaw all at once. The top layer of soil/pavement thaws first, becoming soft, saturated and heavy with meltwater. The deep ground around the tank often remains rock-solid for several weeks longer. As the top layer of soil begins to settle, it can pull piping downward. Rigid piping that lacks flexibility at entry points is especially vulnerable to these forces. Entry boots can warp and sump walls can crack, creating a direct path into the sump for the high-pressure meltwater.

Installing continuous flexible piping systems will help mitigate the risks of seasonal soil instability. By eliminating buried joints and fittings between the tank and dispenser sump, these systems remove common sub-surface failure points. Additionally, when all



BY RECOGNIZING THE RISKS THAT HYDROSTATIC PRESSURE, SOIL INSTABILITY AND CORROSIVE MELT WATER POSE — AND INSTALLING UST EQUIPMENT ENGINEERED TO WITHSTAND THIS TRIPLE THREAT — RETAIL FUELING SITES CAN MOVE AWAY FROM REACTIVE MAINTENANCE AND TOWARD A STRATEGY OF BUILT-IN RESILIENCE.

termination points are housed within secondary containment sumps, the piping can better absorb the physical shifts of a spring thaw.

Finally, the spring thaw introduces more than moisture. In regions where road salt and chemical de-icers are utilized, the resulting meltwater creates a harsh brine that aggressively targets oxidizable infrastructure. When salt-laden water infiltrates fueling system equipment, substandard hardware degrades. To counter the chemical assault, be sure new fueling system components feature corrosion-resistant materials, such as high-grade composites for manholes, dispenser sumps, tanks sumps and spill buckets.

Beyond the Thaw: A Proactive Path Forward

Without a doubt, the adage, "there is no bad weather, only inadequate gear," applies

to underground fueling infrastructure. Whether a site is currently navigating the peak of a spring thaw or performing a mid-season infrastructure audit, the window for hardening a system is always open.

By recognizing the risks that hydrostatic pressure, soil instability and corrosive meltwater pose — and installing UST equipment engineered to withstand this triple threat — retail fueling sites can move away from reactive maintenance and toward a strategy of built-in resilience. **C**

Steve Stewart is the senior Canadian & Caribbean sales manager for OPW Retail Fueling, based in Smithfield, NC, USA. He can be reached at steve.stewart@opwglobal.com. For more information on OPW Retail Fueling, go to opwglobal.com/opw-retail-fueling.

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ANNOUNCEMENTS



Franke Coffee Systems Americas Appoints Chris Kennedy as President

Smyrna, Tennessee – Franke Coffee Systems Americas has named Chris Kennedy president, effective December 1, 2025, following a period of steady leadership during his interim appointment.

Kennedy has served as interim president and vice president of finance and operations, where he led finance, warehouse operations, customer service, and field service teams across the Americas. In his new role, he will oversee the region's growth strategy, strengthen customer partnerships, and ensure alignment with Franke Coffee Systems' global vision.

He will report directly to Marco Zancolò, CEO of Franke Coffee Systems, and will continue to serve on the company's global leadership team.

"Chris has been a stabilizing and forward looking leader during a critical period of transition," said Zancolò. "His ability to connect financial discipline, operational excellence, and people leadership makes him exceptionally well positioned to lead our Americas organization into its next phase of growth." Kennedy joined Franke in July 2021 and has been instrumental in driving cross functional collaboration and operational performance while maintaining continuity across the business. His leadership has supported both customer experience improvements and internal team development across the region.

Franke Coffee Systems Americas serves a wide range of professional coffee environments, delivering premium automatic coffee solutions backed by innovation, reliability, and service excellence.



EcoTank Manufacturing Facility | Orangeville, ON

EcoTank Expands Local Production with \$1.67 Million Investment

Orangeville— The Ontario government is welcoming an investment of \$1,674,016 by EcoTank Canada, a distributor of washer fluid dispenser, to increase their domestic manufacturing capabilities and create 30 new jobs in Dufferin-Caledon.

The investment was announced recently by Sylvia Jones, member of provincial parliament for Dufferin-Caledon.

"By supporting strategic investments from regional businesses, our government is protecting Ontario's workers and creating the conditions for a strong, stable, and resilient economy that can weather any storm," said MPP Jones "EcoTank's investment will support growth and innovation across the local manufacturing sector and create more good-paying jobs for workers and families in Orangeville."

With this investment, EcoTank will build a new facility in Dufferin County and expand their production capabilities through the installation of a new assembly line. The new facility and assembly line will allow EcoTank to reshore the manufacturing of their washer fluid dispensers from Europe to Ontario, allowing the company to keep costs low and securing major contracts within the retail trade industry. The project will also hold broader supply-chain benefits for the province, as 90 per cent of the supporting materials will also be sourced exclusively from Ontario suppliers.

"EcoTank is transforming the way consumers refill washer fluid in their vehicles by offering

a solution that is not only more convenient, but significantly more environmentally friendly than traditional plastic jugs," said Robbie Mair, CEO and founder of EcoTank. "With the support of the Government of Ontario, we've accelerated our growth and established a new facility in Dufferin County, enabling us to manufacture our bulk washer fluid dispensers locally and export them across North America."

In support of this investment, the government is providing EcoTank with \$239,102 in funding through the Regional Development Program's Southwestern Ontario Development Fund (SWODF).

"Employing more than 800,000 workers across the province, Ontario's manufacturing sector is the economic engine of our nation," said Vic Fedeli, Minister of Economic Development, Job Creation and Trade. "Our government is proud to support local companies like EcoTank as they expand their operations, and we thank them for their contributions to Ontario's dynamic and growing manufacturing ecosystem."

Ontario is investing over \$230 million through its Regional Development Program to help manufacturers across the province grow while supporting distinct regional priorities. To date, Ontario has supported more than 180 projects through the program, leveraging over \$2.6 billion in new investments, and helping to create more than 5,500 jobs.

MI PETRO SERVICE

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Petro Service Limited Expands National Footprint with Acquisition of MI Petro

Saint John, New Brunswick – On February 9, 2026, Saint John-based Petro Service Limited announced the acquisition of Calgary-based MI Petro. With offices in Alberta and British Columbia, MI Petro is a Western Canadian firm with more than 30 years of experience delivering fueling infrastructure products and services across the country as a Gilbarco distributor.

Founded in 1985, Petro Service has grown from rebuilding gas pumps into one of Canada's fastest-growing petroleum service providers, offering solutions across the fueling landscape, including petroleum, and electric vehicle (EV) infrastructure, as well as carwash services. With 180 employees and eight branches spanning Newfoundland and Labrador, Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, Quebec, Manitoba, Saskatchewan, and Alberta, Petro Service maintains most of its workforce in Atlantic Canada.

"This acquisition represents a significant milestone in our growth journey," said Laurent Frenette, president of Petro Service. "MI Petro brings a highly skilled team, a strong reputation in western Canada, and long-standing relationships with some of the country's most recognizable retail fueling brands. Together, we are better positioned to support our customers from coast to coast."

MI Petro, headquartered in Calgary, Alberta, with a branch office in Maple Ridge, British Columbia, employs 23 people, including 10 technicians. The company has delivered complex fueling projects for more than three decades, serving key national customers such as 7-Eleven, Canadian Tire, Canco, Circle K, and BG Fuels.

"Joining Petro Service allows us to build on our legacy while gaining access to expanded resources and a truly national platform," said Kim Hansen, president, MI Petro. "Our customers will continue to receive the same high level of service they expect, while benefiting from enhanced capabilities and long-term investment."

Over the past eight years, Petro Service has made significant investments to grow its western Canadian operations, and this acquisition further accelerates that approach. Both organizations share a commitment to safety, technical excellence, and supporting the communities in which they operate.

The acquisition is effective immediately, with operational continuity for employees and no expected disruption to customers or ongoing projects.

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Learn more and start saving today

Shell joins the Scene+ Loyalty Network in Alberta

Scene+ members can get up to 10¢ per litre in value by paying with eligible linked Scotiabank or Tangerine payment cards. Calgary, AB – Launching in Alberta, Shell Canada (Shell), Scene+, Scotiabank and Tangerine, make it easy for Albertans to combine instant savings and Scene+ rewards on their fuel purchases at Shell locations across the province.

Customers who pay with an eligible Scotiabank or Tangerine payment card linked to a Shell Go+ account can now unlock up to 10¢ per litre in total value – with no minimum spend required.

Scotiabank and Tangerine cardholders can link their eligible payment card to Shell Go+ for instant savings at the pump. Cardholders can also earn Scene+ points or cash back with their linked card and their linked Scene+ membership.

How to Get up to 10¢ per litre in total value on Shell fuel purchases with an eligible linked Scotiabank payment card:

- Instant savings of 3¢ per litre on all grades of Shell fuel when you pay with an eligible linked debit or credit card.
- Additional instant savings of 4¢ per litre on Shell V-Power® fuel with a linked Scotiabank credit card that earns Scene+ points.
- Earn up to 3¢ per litre equivalent in redeemable Scene+ point value on Shell V-Power fuel with a linked Scotiabank credit card that earns Scene+ points.

How to Get up to 8¢ per litre in total value on Shell fuel purchases with a linked

Tangerine cash back credit card and a Scene+ membership:

- Instant savings of 3¢ per litre on all grades of Shell fuel when you pay with any linked Tangerine credit card.
- Earn up to 3¢ per litre in cash back on all grades of Shell fuel when you pay with your linked credit card and have 'fuel' selected as a two per cent cash back category.
- Earn up to 2¢ per litre equivalent in redeemable Scene+ point value on Shell V-Power when you link your Scene+ membership card to your Shell Go+ account.

Starting in Spring 2026, Tangerine clients will also be eligible to get up to 10¢ per litre in total value on Shell fuel with Tangerine's newly announced rewards credit card powered by Scene+.

Earn and redeem with Scene+ at Shell. Use a Scene+ membership card at Shell to:

- Earn 1 Scene+ point per litre on all grades of Shell fuel.
- Earn 1 Scene+ point per \$1 on car wash and eligible convenience retail purchases.
- Redeem 1,000 Scene+ points for \$10 off fuel, carwashes or eligible convenience items — instantly, at the pump or in-store.

Even more ways to earn with Shell Go+:

Shell Go+ members who link their Scene+ membership in the Shell App unlock bonus rewards including:

- Ten per cent more bonus Scene+ points on Shell Regular, Plus and Diesel2X more bonus Scene+ points on Shell V-Power.
- Ten per cent more bonus Scene+ points on eligible car wash and convenience retail purchases.

AD INDEX

AirServ	46	Kleen-Rite	13
Big Brands	14/15	Modern Wash.....	OBC
Century Tobacco.....	38	National Energy Solutions	30
Con-Serv Water Recovery Systems.....	41	National Retail Solutions	22
Dover Fueling / Bulloch Technologies.....	7	OPW Retail Fueling	42
Englobe	33	SoBrite Water	43
Franke	17	Tommy Car Wash Systems	IFC
Innovative Control Systems	IBC	Washworld Inc.....	4
Istobal USA	25	WPMA.....	20

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