



Getting Your C-store Ready

Preparing Beverage Equipment for the Holidays

By Nate DePasquale, GM of Beverage Equipment Repair (BERCO)

The stretch between Thanksgiving and New Year's Day is unlike any other period on the Georgia convenience store calendar. C-stores across the state see a concentrated surge of customers during the holiday period — road travelers, holiday shoppers, and locals who rely on a quick stop as much during the holidays as they do the rest of the year.

Beverage programs feel that rush acutely. Hot coffee volume climbs as temperatures drop, frozen beverage demand stays stronger through the holiday period than northern markets would expect, and ice machines and soda systems push higher volume than they handle at normal traffic.



What makes the holiday period a different kind of stress test is sustained volume with no meaningful recovery period. Extended hours mean equipment runs longer per day. Staff who are newer or more stretched than usual are less likely to notice early warning signs or perform cleaning tasks on schedule. Equipment that was performing adequately at normal traffic reveals its deferred maintenance under that load.

Hot Beverage Equipment

A complete deep cleaning of all hot beverage equipment — full disassembly of brew baskets, spray heads, and product contact components — is the most critical pre-season task. Coffee oil accumulated through the fall becomes a significant flavor problem when brew frequency increases and cleaning intervals are compressed by traffic. Descaling before Thanksgiving week removes

accumulated through the fall becomes a significant flavor problem when brew frequency increases and cleaning intervals are compressed by traffic. Descaling before Thanksgiving week removes accumulated scale from heating elements that are already working harder than they should be, and a filter cartridge replacement ensures water quality does not degrade through the holiday period. For Georgia c-stores running whole-bean programs, grinder calibration and burr inspection confirm that extraction consistency will hold through high-volume operation.

Frozen Beverage Equipment

Georgia's mild holiday weather is a genuine competitive advantage for c-store operators with strong frozen beverage programs — but it means those machines are working harder through November and December than their counterparts in colder markets. Gaskets and seals showing early wear under normal conditions will fail faster under sustained high-volume operation. Replacing any components showing deterioration before the season begins is significantly less disruptive than an emergency repair during the Christmas weekend rush. Mix ratio calibration before Thanksgiving confirms that CO₂ pressure, syrup draw rates, and water flow are all within specification — because a machine producing slightly off product at normal volume produces the same off product at far higher volume during peak demand.

Fountain Soda and Ice Machines

Nozzle cleaning and sanitization before the holiday period addresses the syrup residue and mineral deposits that accumulate with draw frequency — and a customer who fills a large fountain drink that tastes wrong is not a customer who comes back. CO₂ supply confirmation before Thanksgiving prevents the store that runs out during a holiday weekend from losing fountain service entirely at the moment when travel traffic is at its peak. For ice machines, condenser coil cleaning is the single most impactful pre-season task — a fouled coil reduces ice production output at exactly the moment when every beverage category is drawing from the same supply simultaneously.

The Staffing Layer

Every piece of pre-season equipment preparation delivers more value when staff know what to look for. A pre-holiday briefing covering what normal operation looks and sounds like for each beverage system, what early warning signs look like, and who to contact when something seems off is a thirty-minute investment that protects the much larger investment in pre-season maintenance. Early warning signs that a trained employee catches on a Monday become scheduled service calls. The same signs that go unnoticed until Friday afternoon become emergency dispatches during the busiest travel days of the year.

Beverage equipment does not become unreliable because the holidays are busy. It becomes unreliable because the holidays surface what deferred maintenance and inadequate preparation left unaddressed. The preparation that happens before Thanksgiving week is what determines whether the holiday season is one your operation navigates successfully or one it spends managing problems that were already in progress before the rush arrived.