



Gas Stations Want Self-Service amid Coronavirus Outbreak

By: Raven Santana, April 15, 2020

To view video, please visit: <https://www.njtvonline.org/news/video/gas-stations-want-self-service-amid-coronavirus-outbreak/>

Kashmir Gill is the president of Gill Petroleum Inc., which owns and operates around 67 gas stations in the state. He says it's nearly impossible to practice social distancing while pumping gas, leaving both employees and customers at risk.

"Our attendants are handling cash transaction, credit card transactions, and they can't have that 6 foot distance. And if, God forbid, if one guy, if he gets coronavirus positive, now he's serving 300 customers a day," Gill said.

Gill says due to employees' concerns, he has been forced to cut back hours, and in some cases even close gas stations entirely.

"The guy who was supposed to show up in the morning, didn't show up. Now my next guy is going to show up 1:30, 2 o'clock, so until then I have to keep it closed. Slowly, as the cases started rising, our gas attendants started realizing that this is dangerous and they will not just show up. They stopped showing up. Instead of opening 24 hours, we went down to 14 hours. Now we are down to 12 hours. We feel betrayed by the governor and government," he said.

"Our employees are important us; we want to protect them, we want to protect our customers and we want to remain open. Allowing a temporary suspension of the self-serve laws in New Jersey will accomplish all three of those things," said Sal Risalvato is the executive director of the New Jersey Gasoline-Convenience-Automotive Association.

Risalvato says by law all 2,200 gas stations in the state must remain open. Because it's illegal to allow a customer to pump their own gas — unless it's diesel — he's now asking the governor to allow motorists to pump their own gas.

"I had a member contact me and say that there's customers out in his parking lot filling up gas and adamantly refusing to let the attendant anywhere near their cars," he said.

Risalvato has yet to hear back from the governor, but believes self serve would be a quick and easy fix. He has already had more than 200 gas stations cut back hours or close and he cannot afford to lose any more.