

Walmart plans to fill online orders with help from robots at some US stores

By [Melissa Fares](#)

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NEW YORK, (Reuters) - Walmart Inc will add small robot-staffed warehouses to dozens of its stores to help fill orders for pickup and delivery, the company said on Wednesday, as Americans shift their spending online amid the Covid-19 pandemic.



Credit: Walmart Corporate

The robots will work behind the scenes, picking frozen and refrigerated foods as well as smaller general merchandise items from inside the warehouses, or local fulfillment centers, that will carry "thousands of frequently purchased items".

Store staff, meanwhile, will go to the sales floor to fetch fresh produce, meat, seafood and larger general merchandise items like large-screen TVs, then returning to the centers to finish assembling orders, the company said.

The world's largest retailer, which operates nearly 5,000 stores nationwide, did not say how many stores will have the new centers but said it was "planning dozens of locations, with many more to come."



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The trend has fuelled record digital sales at major retailers such as Target Corp and Best Buy, and Bentonville, Arkansas-based Walmart has been no exception.

In Q1, at the start of the pandemic, pick-up and delivery services at Walmart surged 300%, while the number of new customers jumped four-fold, the company said.

"We don't see the use of these services changing in the future – we expect that we'll continue to serve more and more customers who have come to rely on pickup and delivery," Tom Ward, SVP of Customer Product for Walmart U.S, told reporters on a conference call.

Walmart began testing similar automated technology in late 2019 at a store in Salem, New Hampshire and found that orders can be filled in "just a few minutes," Ward said.



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The new move comes as Walmart's chief executive for U.S. e-commerce operations in the United States, Marc Lore, is due to step down at the end of the month.

Under Lore's watch, the big-box retailer launched same-day delivery and store pick-up services, as well as an Amazon Prime rivaling membership programme dubbed "Walmart Plus" to take on the e-commerce giant in its own game.

Source: Reuters

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Reporting by Melissa Fares in New York; editing by Richard Pullin.

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