

Walmart pulls violent game displays but will still sell guns

August 9 2019, by Michelle Chapman, Mae Anderson And Joseph Pisani



In this Dec. 15, 2010 file photo, a view of the entertainment section of a Wal-Mart store is seen in Alexandria, Va. Walmart is taking down all signs and displays from its stores that depict violence, following a mass shooting at its El Paso, Texas location that left 22 people dead. The retailer, according to an internal memo, instructed employees to turn off or unplug any video game consoles that show violent games, as well as ensure that no movies depicting violence are playing in its electronics departments. (AP Photo, File)

Walmart has ordered workers to remove video game signs and displays that depict violence from stores nationwide after 22 people died in a shooting at one of its Texas stores but will continue to sell guns.

In an internal memo, the retailer told employees to remove any violent marketing material, unplug Xbox and PlayStation consoles that show violent video games and turn off any violence depicted on screens in its electronics departments.

Employees also were asked to shut off hunting season videos in the sporting goods department where guns are sold. "Remove from the salesfloor or turn off these items immediately," the memo said.

Walmart will still sell the violent video games and hasn't made any changes to its gun sales policy, despite pressure from workers, politicians and activists to do so.

"We've taken this action out of respect for the incidents of the past week," Walmart spokeswoman Tara House said in an email. She declined to answer any questions beyond the statement.

"That is a non-answer and a non-solution," said Thomas Marshall, who works at Walmart's e-commerce division in San Bruno, California, and has helped organize a petition to get the company to stop selling guns. He said they plan to email the petition, which has more than 53,000 signatures, to Walmart CEO Doug McMillon on Friday.



In this Aug. 3, 2019 file photo, El Paso Fire Medical personnel arrive at the scene of a shooting at a Walmart near the Cielo Vista Mall in El Paso, Texas. The FBI has labeled two of those attacks, at the Texas Walmart and California food festival, as domestic terrorism—acts meant to intimidate or coerce a civilian population and affect government policy. But the bureau hasn't gone that far with a shooting at an Ohio entertainment district. (Mark Lambie/The El Paso Times via AP, File)

After the massacre at the El Paso Walmart this weekend, McMillon said the company "will be thoughtful and deliberate in our responses."

After the mass [shooting](#) at a Parkland, Florida, high school last year, Walmart Inc. banned sales of firearms and ammunition to people younger than 21. It had stopped selling AR-15s and other semi-automatic weapons in 2015, citing weak sales.

The massacre in El Paso was followed by another shooting hours later in Dayton, Ohio, that killed nine people.

President Donald Trump blamed "gruesome and grisly video games" for encouraging violence Monday, but there is no known link between violent video games and [violent acts](#).

The United States has had 254 [mass shootings](#) —instances of four or more people being shot in individual outbreaks—in 2019, according to the Gun Violence Archive. That's more mass shootings than days so far this year.

Scott Galloway, a marketing professor at New York University, said the move to hide violent imagery in stores was "a cheap attempt to distract consumers and the media from the real issue, which is, Walmart continues to sell guns."



Springfield police respond to a Walmart in Springfield, Mo., Thursday afternoon, Aug. 8, 2019, after reports of a man with a weapon in the store. Police in Springfield, Missouri, say they have arrested an armed man who showed up the Walmart store wearing body armor, sending panicked shoppers fleeing the store. (Harrison Keegan/The Springfield News-Leader via AP)

Other companies have made changes after the shootings. ESPN postponed the airing of an esports competition for shooting game "Apex Legends." And NBC Universal pulled some ads for its upcoming movie "The Hunt," which depicted characters hunting and shooting at each other.

The killings have put the country on edge.

On Thursday, panicked shoppers fled a Walmart in Springfield, Missouri, after a man carrying a rifle and wearing body armor walked around the store before being stopped by an off-duty firefighter. No shots were fired and the man was arrested after surrendering.

On Friday, Massachusetts Sen. Elizabeth Warren, a Democrat running for president, blasted Walmart in a tweet.

"The weapons they sell are killing their own customers and employees. No profit is worth those lives. Do the right thing —stop selling guns," she wrote.

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Citation: Walmart pulls violent game displays but will still sell guns (2019, August 9) retrieved 20 April 2024 from <https://techxplore.com/news/2019-08-walmart-violent-game-guns.html>

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