H-E-B will deploy robots to handle online orders for curbside pickup, delivery

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Robots will help H-E-B grocery stores keep up with the growing demand

for online grocery services amid the pandemic.

The San Antonio, Texas-based grocery chain has partnered with the automation firm Swisslog to deploy a number of robots to support the chain's curbside pick-up and delivery business.

Swisslog is providing warehouses that use modular "Autostore" robots to fulfill small online orders, the companies said in a joint press release. A video demonstration on YouTube shows how the automated system works. The robots run along tracks to gather items based on digital orders. It then delivers the order to a warehouse worker for processing.

It's an intuitive system that learns which items are in higher demand and moves bins to make them easier to access for speedier processing over time, Swisslog says. "If one robot breaks down, another takes over its tasks," according to Swisslog's website.

The integration with H-E-B grocery stores will allow the chain "to efficiently meet the growing demand for curbside pick-up without negatively impacting customer experience in the store," according to the announcement.

It's unclear how many robot centers H-E-B will use.

Swisslog has more than 170 of the centers installed around the world, the companies said. H-E-B currently has more than 340 stores and over 100,000 employees across Texas and Mexico.

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