

COVID-19 pandemic now being blamed for an appliance shortage

First, it was toilet paper, now experts said the pandemic is causing a shortage in new kitchen appliances, along with repairs.

Volume 90%

Author: CBS News

Published: 6:15 PM EDT September 9, 2020

Updated: 6:22 PM EDT September 9, 2020

The pandemic has led to shortages of everything from toilet paper to lumber, and even coins. Now people are having trouble getting their hands on appliances.

Keith's Appliances in Connecticut has seen sales go up 60% this summer, and it's not just local customers. Owner Jessica Burzycki says, "We probably get about 20 calls a day from all over the country, people looking for freezers. And this has been happening since the beginning of March."

When the pandemic hit, Americans started stocking up on food and needed freezers to hold it. Then demand grew for refrigerators, washers, and dryers as more people upgraded their appliances. At the same time, the coronavirus forced many factories to shut down or scale back production, leading to shortages.

Jill Johnson needs to replace a broken fridge and was told the wait for some models could be months. "I was very limited as to what I could buy because they don't have it in stock," she says.

Getting an older appliance fixed isn't easy either. Repair specialist Robert Villatoro is working 12 hours days, seven days a week to try and accommodate all his customers. "Right now we're booked 3 to 4 days in advance, so, you know, we're having to turn people down," he says.

Air conditioner service companies are also seeing a boost in business. With people staying home, A/C units are getting heavy use and breaking down more. David Kahn is the owner of Kahn Air Conditioning. He says, "The telephone is directly connected to the thermometer. When it gets hot, the phone rings like crazy." The demand for A/C repair will go down as the temperatures drop.

Experts believe appliance shortages should start easing this fall as factories get back up to full speed.

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