In the wake of the coronavirus pandemic, hair salons in the South are beginning to reopen. Despite concerns from some salon owners over whether or not it’s safe, hair salons are getting ready to open back up in parts of the country after weeks of government-mandated closures due to the coronavirus pandemic.

Governor Brian Kemp of Georgia announced providers shut down across nonessential businesses in the state are allowed to open starting Friday, including hair salons, in response to federal guidelines. South Carolina also announced Monday that some nonessential businesses in the state are allowed to reopen, including hair salons.

Hair salons for reopening.

Salon chair photograph by Lexie Moreland

BEAUTY

Hair Salons in the South Begin to Reopen, With Some Trepidation

Salons are ready to reopen, but with owners and consumers worried about safety, the experience looks a lot different.

BY ELLEN THOMAS

Still, Neil said most salon owners he’s spoken to in his network are feeling the financial pressure and ready to get back to work as soon as lockdowns in their respective states are lifted. Salon owners are already meeting with their companies, gearing up to open in the coming weeks, he said.

“It seems like a good number [of salons] are planning to reopen,” said Jay Elarar, co-founder of MoroccanOil, which distributes its products in about 10,000 salons on the U.S. market. “Despite concerns over catching the virus, executives say consumer demand for hair services is still there — especially after several weeks of being closed.”

“All the way through, there’s one common thread of conversations that are happening across the country — ‘How do I adjust my business to get to a different way of operating?’”

Aveda has also introduced a multipronged set of initiatives to help the professional channel, which includes donating $9,000 salons worldwide. The brand has donated $600,000 to the Salon and Spa Relief Fund, a nonprofit offering grants ranging from $5,000 to $5,000 to support small businesses implementing safety measures and providing customers the opportunity to turn their loyalty program points into donations to the fund, as well as an option to donate during online checkout. Their fundraising effort has raised $1.5 million.

In addition to supporting businesses, Aveda is also giving professionals the opportunity to hone their skills during the salon hiatus. “We created a thorough education program of over a thousand classes. “We are hoping they are using it for personal living expenses, because everyone in the professional industry isn’t getting a paycheck now.”

Aveda is also donating product locally to open up safely and effectively, said Neill.

“My question is why would you close us down to begin with if your opinion now is that it’s safe to reopen, even without the necessary supplies? [Salons] want to reopen, but we need to be set up for success.”

“The next set of

Questions will be financial. ‘I now have a rent space that’s twice as big as what I can do from a capacity perspective, how do I adjust my business to get to that place?’”

With COVID-19 continuing to spread and no vaccine in sight, the salon experience will look quite different than it did pre-pandemic.

Health and safety precautions are top-of-mind for salon owners who are reopening. Though individual states are issuing COVID-19 health and sanitation guidelines through their cosmetology boards, the Professional Beauty Association is working on a cohesive protocol designed to help salons get back to business safely. BPA’s mandate is expected to be disseminated to state cosmetology boards and to salon owners across the country next week.

“Salons are going to be on a different level,” said Elarar, who sits on the PBA board and is working on the task force along with executives from L’Oréal and Schwarzkopf, that is designing the protocol.

“There will be fewer clients per day, a quick maintenance, not makeovers” like root touch-ups and cuts, said Dan Langer, president of R+Co and chief marketing officer at Luxury Brand Partners, in order to minimize appointment time and the number of people in salons. R+Co is sold in about 2,000 prestige salons in the U.S. Langer said the owners he has spoken with are choosing to reopen based on personal preference — most are reopening, some aren’t.

Some salon owners in states where lockdowns are being lifted are opening due to financial pressure, though they remain worried about the safety of their staff and clients.

Bryan Nunes, owner of Bio Salon in Raleigh, N.C., said his salon, which employees over 40 stylists, is stocked with the sanitation supplies necessary to reopen, and he’s able to be in touch with his staff’s schedule and his opening hours to accommodate for fewer clients in the salon at a time. But he worries for smaller salons and independent boost renters in the area, who may be facing delayed shipping time on bulk orders of masks, gloves and sanitizing wipes. “What’s more, they’ll be taking on fewer clients and making less money, but will be back on the hook for rent once they start business operations back up.”

“We can’t get a PPP loan or access to supplies, and all of a sudden [the government] wants them to reopen — there’s a lot of moving parts.”

Conflicting communication from the government has made it difficult for small business owners to open up safely and effectively, said Neill.

“My question is why would you close us down to begin with if your opinion now is that it’s safe to reopen, even without the necessary supplies? [Salons] want to reopen, but we need to be set up for success.”

The beauty industry is continuing efforts to support salons and professional channels following closures resulting from the coronavirus.

Kao Salon Division has increased their independent initiatives to help support salons on Monday that tonomines.

The parent company of Oribe, Goldwell and RIM is halting all invoicing to salons and providing South’s recovery insight to salon owners. Oribe.com has also introduced an affiliate commission program through their salon partners. Kao Salon’s efforts in North America, which includes charitable donations and free product, amounts to $5.6 million in total.

Trevor Attenborough, vice president of salon commercial for Kao Americas, said best practices for sanitation and social distancing can complicate salon openings.

“What you have is salon owners trying to figure out what reopening is going to look like. You can’t override authorities, but what does sanitation look like? How can you make it safe?” he said.

Salons owners reopening will also have to face a surplus of demand while not being able to run salons at capacity due to social distancing guidelines, Attenborough said. “The next set of

questions will be financial. ‘I now have a rent space that’s twice as big as what I can do from a capacity perspective, how do I adjust my business to get to that place?’”

And nobody knows what will happen with social distancing, if there’ll be a second wave, if it’ll get more strict,” Attenborough said.

Many states have mandated the closures of salons, spas and service-oriented beauty businesses.

Beauty giants like Kao, Avada and Beauty Changes Lives are supporting the professional channel with a series of grants and initiatives.

A second wave of grants and initiatives from Avada, Kao and Beauty Changes Lives seek to support the industry.

BEAUTY BACKS PROFESSIONAL CHANNEL

A second wave of grants and initiatives from Avada, Kao and Beauty Changes Lives seek to support the industry.

BY JAMES MANSO

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Aveda is also donating product locally near their headquarters in Minneapolis;