



Penny situation has improved. The copper coins return to circulation.

January 2026

Early 2026 brought relief for operators struggling with penny shortages. The U.S. Treasury issued their own guidance to retailers on how to handle penny rounding. Additionally, the Federal Reserve announced that they will resume circulation of pennies across the country which should mitigate the penny shortage for a while.

WHAT WAS THE TREASURY'S GUIDANCE?

The U.S. Treasury's guidance regarding how to round for cash transactions is in line with what we and the National Restaurant Association advocated for over the past year. Their guidelines are that transactions which end in a 1, 2, 6 or 7 should round down and 3, 4, 8 and 9 should all round up to the nearest nickel. This only applies if there are not enough pennies to give exact change.

However, this guidance does not provide legal protection for operators. It does signal the Federal government's willingness to engage on this issue. Operators should carefully examine their operations to determine which form of rounding should be used.

PENNIES ARE BACK IN CIRCULATION? DID THEY EVER LEAVE?

After the President gave his order to cease the minting of pennies, shortly afterwards the Federal Reserve halted all circulation of pennies between banks and distribution sites. That effectively meant that no pennies would move between banks or from the government to the banks. After a while, many distribution sites ran out of pennies and stopped accepting them altogether. As such, pennies quickly became a hot commodity. Early this year, the Federal Reserve announced that pennies will be recirculated into the U.S. economy and will no longer be essentially halted.

IS THIS THE END OF THE PENNY ISSUE?

Most likely not. Both the House and Senate introduced legislation to officially codify the end of the penny. And while pennies reentering circulation will ease some issues of scarcity, the U.S. is going to need a more long-term solution to the end of the penny. Originally, penny legislation in Congress was set to establish a proper rounding method. However, that language was stripped from the bill before it moved any further. We will continue to engage on this issue with our partners at the national level.