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The Boston Globe

Some Mass. lottery machines to check ID's of buyers

By [Dan Adams](#) Globe Correspondent May 27, 2015

”The Lottery is activating this feature across all of the approximately 500 PAT machines currently in the field to fully protect the integrity of ticket sales at retail locations,” said Mass. State Lottery Commission executive director Beth Bresnahan.

Facing criticism from antigambling groups that it is too easy for minors to buy scratch tickets, the Massachusetts State Lottery has quietly begun activating technology in its self-serve vending machines that requires players to prove they are 18 or older.

The change means that players who want to buy scratch tickets from vending machines commonly found in the checkout areas of large supermarkets — so-called Player Activated Terminals, or PATs — first need to scan their driver’s licenses.

Each of the 500 or so self-serve machines that were deployed beginning in 2012 came equipped with the ability to scan licenses, but the lottery began activating the feature only this month.

In a letter to retailers, the Massachusetts State Lottery Commission’s executive director, Beth Bresnahan, said the previous practice of having store employees guard against young patrons using the machines had proved effective.

“However,” Bresnahan added, “following some incidents of underage play that recently transpired . . . the Lottery is activating this feature across all of the approximately 500 PAT machines currently in the field to fully protect the integrity of ticket sales at retail locations.”

A spokesman for the lottery said the change will not affect the system’s other self-serve vending machines that don’t have license scanners.

There are about 1,200 of these older model Instant Ticket Vending Machines, found mostly in bars and convenience stores.

Bresnahan’s letter to retailers said the lottery’s long-term plan is for every vending machine to include an age-verification system, though it did not specify a deadline.

The move by the lottery comes after the national [Stop Predatory Gambling Foundation sued Star Market in March](#), alleging the grocery chain had not blocked minors from accessing the vending machines in its stores.

The foundation, represented by the Boston-based Public Health Advocacy Institute, published [a video that it says shows a 14-year-old buying scratch tickets from machines in two Boston-area Star Market stores](#).

The video and subsequent lawsuit prompted [calls for better monitoring of lottery vending machines](#).

Activating the age-verification feature of the PAT machines is “a step in the direction,” said Andrew Rainer, who is litigation director at the Public Health Advocacy Institute.

“But I think we need more information about how reliable this technology is and what the lottery is planning to do with the 1,200 older machines,” he said.

Rainer said that he had also asked the lottery about privacy issues triggered by the new license-scanning technology, including whether personal information will be saved and used to track ticket purchases.

The lottery said Tuesday that the PAT machines only check licenses against the American Association of Motor Vehicle Administrators’ driver’s license data-verification service, and that it does not retain personal information.

However, with casinos poised to debut in Massachusetts, the lottery has expressed interest in gathering more data on customer habits and sales patterns.

A voluntary loyalty card system expected to be introduced along with [new counter-top terminals](#) late next year would give frequent players discounts.

But the system would also track where and how often those players buy various scratch tickets, allowing the lottery to fine-tune its offerings for maximum profit in the face of new competition.