

Candy sales rise year-round

By BARBARA WHITE-SAX

Retailers know that seasonal sales are crucial to the candy category. Seasonal candy—especially non-chocolate novelties—have had strong sales this past year, and industry experts say the trend will continue.

"Seasonal-themed candy and novelties are a critical component of the retail complex," said Rob Auerbach, president of CandyRific. "The segment has grown from providing a little lift to playing a much bigger role." Seasonal products, he said, boost sales across the entire category.

Valentine's Day led the way last year with "tremendous sales" according to the National Confectioners Association. Non-chocolate Valentine's Day 2007 candy sales were up 7.4 percent over the previous year, according to the NCA, with the drug store channel's sales ahead nearly

12 percent.

Easter 2007 non-chocolate sales were up nearly 13 percent and for Holiday 2007, Christmas-themed chocolate sales were up 4.6 percent and non-chocolate



Holiday chocolate sales were generally up during fiscal 2007.

was up nearly 7 percent.

Halloween candy sales also were strong with Halloween-themed chocolate candy up 5 percent and non-chocolate candy ahead nearly 9 percent. CandyRific's Auerbach said price points for Halloween novelties have been growing. "Consumers kept price points low when most of their pur-

chases were meant to be giveaways for trick or treating," he said. "Now that more people are moving away from trick-or-treating and are having Halloween parties, they are willing to spend more on novelty gift items."

The drug channel has traditionally been a strong player in the seasonal arena, but shifting trends may allow them to fine tune their mix to better maximize sales.

Jenn Elleck, a spokeswoman for the National Confectioners Association, said the continued shortening of the seasonal sales periods have affected seasonal candy sales. "The bulk of Christmas candy sales now happen in the last two weeks and even the week after the holiday," she said. "The great thing about candy though is that early merchandising of seasonal candy results in a great deal of impulse sales."

Smaller confectionery companies, such as Just Born and CandyRific, traditionally have done a good job providing retailers with an array of seasonal novelties. Bigger players are working to differentiate product to bring something special to the seasonal aisles. Amidst the sea of red and pink candies last Valentine's Day, Mars Snackfood U.S. introduced limited-edition packs of green M&M's, an effort that made playful reference to the rumored aphrodisiac effect of "The Green Ones." Sadly, no studies have been done to prove the validity of the claim.