

Shoppers Scuffle On Black Thursday

BY MAE ANDERSON
AND ANNE D'INNOCENZIO
AP Retail Writers

A shopper in Los Angeles pepper-sprayed her competition for an Xbox and scuffles broke out elsewhere around the U.S. as bargain-hunters crowded malls and big-box stores in an earlier-than-usual start to the madness known as Black Friday.

For the first time, chains such as Target, Best Buy and Kohl's opened their doors at midnight on the most anticipated shopping day of the year. Toys R Us opened for the second straight year on Thanksgiving itself. And some shoppers arrived with sharp elbows.

On Thanksgiving night, a Walmart in Los Angeles brought out a crate of discounted Xboxes, and as a crowd waited for the video game players to be unwrapped, a woman fired pepper spray at the other shoppers "in order to get an advantage," police said.

Ten people suffered cuts and bruises in the chaos, and 10 others had minor injuries from the spray, authorities said. The woman got away in the confusion, and it was not immediately clear whether she got an Xbox.

On Friday morning, police said, two women were injured and a man was charged after a fight broke out at an upstate New York Walmart. And a man was arrested in a scuffle at a jewelry counter at a Walmart in Kissimmee, Fla.

Wal-Mart, the nation's biggest retailer, has taken steps in recent years to control its Black Friday crowds following the 2008 death of one of its workers in a stampede of shoppers. This year, it staggered its door-buster deals



A shopper looks over the electronics section for Black Friday deals in Cockeysville, Maryland, on Friday, November 25, 2011.

instead of offering them all at once.

Wal-Mart spokesman Greg Rossiter said Black Friday was safe at most of its nearly 4,000 U.S., but there were "a few unfortunate incidents."

The incidents were attributed to two converging Black Friday trends: Crowds are getting bigger as stores open earlier and stay open later. At the same time, cash-strapped shoppers are competing for deals on a small number of gifts that everybody wants — tablet computers, TVs and

game consoles like Xbox, Nintendo 3S and Wii.

That's a shift from years past, when there was a wider range of must-have items.

"The more the people, the more the occurrences," said Marshal Cohen, chief industry analyst with market research firm The NPD Group.

A record number of shoppers are expected to head out to stores across the country this weekend to take advantage of discounts of up to 70 percent. For three days starting on Black

Friday, 152 million people are expected to shop, up about 10 percent from last year, according to the National Retail Federation.

Thanksgiving weekend, particularly Black Friday, is huge for retailers.

Over the past six years, Black Friday was the biggest sales day of the year, and it is expected to keep that crown this year, though shoppers seem to be procrastinating more every year, and the fate of the holiday season is increasingly coming down to the last few days.

Friday

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than to wake them up in the morning."

Sales are on track to beat last year's Black Friday, according to Bent. Electronics, toys and housewares were among the big sellers.

JC Penney was also on track to exceed last year's sales, according to Manager Gary Munyer.

When the store opened at 3:30 a.m. Friday, between 75-100 shoppers were waiting to enter.

"I think with the nice weather, it brought more people out," Munyer said.

Luggage, women's boots, small appliances, jewelry and women's clothing were among the hot sellers.

"I'm really pleased with how things are going so far," Munyer said. "It's been a good kick-off for the season."

He and Susie Wann of Head 2 Heels both said they have been encouraging people to shop locally.

"People need to remember we have a lot of fun shopping locally, and you don't have to drive out of town," said Wann.

The clothing store she operates in downtown Yankton opened earlier this year, so Wann said she didn't know what to expect for Black Friday.

"We are very pleased by the

traffic downtown today," she said. "I think we're surprised by it. We didn't open until 10 a.m. because we thought everybody would be at the department stores. It's been awesome downtown. There has been a lot of traffic, including out-of-town visitors."

Meanwhile, Brian Voigt, manager of Yankton's Tractor Supply Co., said sales there were comparable to last year.

"They are going good," he said.

Back at Hy-Vee, Graff said that

she has noticed people are doing less traditional cooking for their holidays.

"Turkey and ham has always been the tradition, but we're seeing a lot of prime rib, roast pork or smoked meats for the holidays," she said.

The warm weather this year, allowing people to comfortably smoke or grill outside, has played a role in that.

"But I think the cooking shows have also played a huge part in what we see as fun, exciting and trendy," Graff added.

This weekend and next is also when many people start making holiday treats, she said.

"This is traditionally one of the biggest baking weekends of the year. We see a lot of those items being sold," Graff stated. "It seemed like a couple years ago, people trended away from the candy and some of the more difficult, time-consuming things. Now we see a trend back to that. Hopefully, young adults and children are being taught the art of making those candies and specialty cookies."

Grandfather Roughed Up By Police In Walmart

BY AMANDA LEE MYERS
Associated Press

PHOENIX — Police in suburban Buckeye were under fire Friday when a video was posted online showing a grandfather on the floor of a Walmart store with a bloody face after police said he was subdued trying to shoplift during a chaotic rush for discounted video games.

The video, posted on YouTube, shows 54-year-old Jerald Allen Newman unconscious and covered in blood after a police officer took him to the ground Thursday night.

Officers in the video are shown trying to sop up blood as outraged customers yell expletives and say "that's police brutality" and "he wasn't doing anything."

"Are you sure that was necessary for shoplifting?" said one shopper. "Why would you throw him down so hard?"

In a police report that redacted the names of officers and witnesses, Newman's wife and other witnesses said he was just trying to help his grandson after the boy was trampled by shoppers, and only put a video game in his waistband to free his hands to help the boy.

Larry Hall, assistant chief of Buckeye police, said Newman was resisting arrest and it appeared the officer acted within reason.

Hall did not immediately release the name of the officer, who was hired off-duty by Walmart with five other officers to deal with the large crowd the store anticipated.

Hall said a Walmart employee alerted the officer involved that Newman had put a video game in his waistband, and that the officer approached

Newman and started to arrest him.

When he had handcuffs on one of Newman's wrists, Hall said Newman told the officer, "I'm not going to jail," and started pulling away and flailing.

Hall said Newman continued resisting and the officer decided to do a leg sweep and take him to the ground.

"Unfortunately, the suspect landed on his head," Hall said.

The officer involved wrote in the police report that he yelled at Newman to "stop resisting!" before deciding to take him to the ground.

"The store was incredibly crowded, and I was concerned about other customers' safety and possibly getting involved," he wrote. "I then utilized a leg sweep with my right leg as I pulled down with my arms to take Jerald to the ground to better affect the arrest and protect the other shoppers."

The report said that Newman's grandson was treated and released for his injuries by firefighters at the scene.

Hall said an administrative review will be conducted to assess the officer's use of force, but it appeared to be justified.

"The officer didn't lift the guy over his head and slam him to the ground," Hall said. "He used a minimum amount of force, the suspect resisted arrest, and the officer actually could have escalated his use of force. But he didn't. He used his hands to take the suspect into custody."

An ambulance took Newman to the hospital, where he got four stitches for a cut on the left side of his forehead. His nose was also bloodied but not broken, Hall said.

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