

Crowds, slim wallets keep consumers from holiday shopping

## Many avoid Black Friday

By JANE PALMER  
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**"I want to enjoy the day as much as possible. I am going surfing."**

Stephanie Perry  
Seaside barista

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BY H. JOSEF

It's not just slim wallets but crazy crowds that put off people from flocking to Black Friday, typically the biggest shopping day of the year.

"It's like a madhouse," said Nick Palmer of Monterey, who said he'll wait to do his shopping on Monday — if at all.

Others interviewed Wednesday at Peninsula shopping centers

shared his sentiments.

"I just couldn't deal with it. There are just too many people," said Stephanie Perry, a Seaside barista. "I'll go later, when I can really give some thought to what I can buy."

Retailers hope most people feel otherwise. They bank on big crowds for Black Friday sales.

Last year, Black Friday accounted for one out of every \$20 spent on holiday purchases,

according to ShopperTrak. This year, stores are looking to boost what has been an otherwise poor sales year.

"Black Friday is really a good kickoff for the holiday season," said Jill Vivanco, general manager of the Del Monte Shopping Center. "The mall is really busy, so we are hoping for a good outcome."

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## Shopping

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"In the worst case, we will probably see what we saw last year," she said.

According to a survey done for the National Retail Federation, the outlook for retailers looks good. The survey said 134 million shoppers probably will hit the stores on Black Friday and over the Thanksgiving weekend — 6 million more than last year.

However, it is not how many people will be

shopping, but how much they'll spend that concerns retailers. An Associated Press-GfK poll said 93 percent of Americans plan to spend less or the same amount as last year because of the poor economy.

"It won't be the same as it used to be," said Sonia Perez of Seaside. "I'll be buying clothes and shoes, something I need rather than toys this time."

Some people, feeling the pinch, may avoid the sales altogether.

"I am not planning on going," said Monterey contractor Mark Russo. He said

a shortage of construction work has shrunk his budget.

Elise Fox, a Monterey mother of two young children, is making all her Christmas presents this year to save her money.

"I used to go just for the craziness of watching people, but with two little kids I won't be doing that now," she said.

Last year, sales for the Thanksgiving weekend fell 1.01 percent, according to MasterCard Advisor's Spending Impulse.

But while Thanksgiving sales were not disastrous in 2008, it was the start of a

poor holiday season for retailers. Overall spending was down 6.3 percent for the months of November and December.

With the local weather forecast calling for warm, dry and sunny days over the weekend, many people may simply choose to do something else rather than fight the shopping crowds.

"I want to enjoy the day as much as possible," Perry said. "I am going surfing."

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