

Wal-Mart to offer Black Friday deals earlier on Thanksgiving

Wal-Mart Stores is kicking off its Black Friday promotions earlier than ever, as more stores open their doors for holiday deals on Thanksgiving.



Shoppers flock to South Coast Plaza in Costa Mesa

by Shan Li

Hoping to limit shopper frustration, the world's biggest retailer is also guaranteeing that shoppers queuing at a certain time on Thanksgiving will get their hands on three hot deals for the holidays.

Although many Wal-Mart stores are open all day on Thanksgiving, special holiday promotions will begin at 8 p.m., two hours earlier than last year. Other deals on electronics and jewelry will be possible throughout the night.

"We got customer feedback that said, 'I like to go out and shop earlier and get to bed earlier,'" said Duncan MacNaughton, chief merchandising and marketing officer of Wal-Mart U.S.

To the delight of some shoppers and the frustration of others, retailers have been experimenting in recent years with Black Friday specials that start earlier for Thanksgiving. Last year, several retailers including Target Corp., Macy's Inc. and Kohl's Corp. decided for the first time to open at midnight, a trend that could eventually replace Black Friday with Black Thursday as the unofficial holiday start.

At Wal-Mart, shoppers queued up from 10 to 11 p.m. on Thanksgiving will be able to buy an Emerson 32-inch television for \$148, an LG Blu-ray player for \$38 or a \$75 Wal-Mart gift card with the purchase of a 16-GB Apple iPad 2.

Even if a particular Wal-Mart runs out, customers can pay and have the product shipped to the store. "We believe the one-hour guarantee ... will eliminate customer frustration during Black Friday," MacNaughton said. Such a move could also prevent aggressive shoppers from making headlines like on past Black Fridays, analysts said. Last year a 2008 mass-rush in Long Island killed

one worker.