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Cyber Monday's deals lure area shoppers

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Boosted by strong Black Friday sales that continued through the Thanksgiving weekend, retailers launched phase two of their holiday shopping strategies with aggressive Cyber Monday promotions.

And with good reason. Online sales this year are expected to grow at 11 percent, nearly three times 2009's 4 percent rate, according to the marketing research firm ComScore.

And national retailers with a Pensacola presence were happy with early Cyber Monday sales.

"It's a little too early to provide a precise report, but we're pleased with the traffic on our site thus far," Toys "R" Us spokeswoman Jennifer Albano said. "Traffic on toysrus.com was robust throughout Thanksgiving weekend, and we've been offering some great deals starting with Cyber Monday."

And for Pensacola Bay Area shoppers like Enrique Lopez, Cyber Monday's greatest appeal is the opportunity to avoid Black Friday crowds while still cashing in on great buys.

But successful Cyber Monday shoppers need to know where to go to compare prices, Lopez says.

"There are plenty of great deals that can be bought online during Cyber Monday, but you've got to go to 'aggregator' sites, like [www.fatwallet.com](#), or [www.slickdeals.com](#) that let you compare prices," he said.

"I'm a real frugal kind of guy," Lopez said, "but I personally don't wait in line on Black Friday to fight for a flat-screen TV deal because there are plenty of equally good deals online."

There are plenty of Cyber Monday deals that will deliver products to your door, he notes, with the delivery charge off-set by not having to pay local and state sales tax.

While online shopping still constitutes a relatively small portion of total holiday sales, it's growing at an ever-increasing rate, and states and municipalities are taking notice.

"Cyber sales are growing faster than overall retail sales," University of West Florida economist Rick Harper said. "Current estimates are that online sales make up between 9 percent and 11 percent of overall retail sales."

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