

Who Wants To Open The Door On Black Friday?

ALEXANDRIA, Va. (CNNMoney.com) – Wal-Mart – expected to benefit this holiday season from its deep discounting in a tough economy – had its Black Friday marred when an employee was trampled to death as thousands of people rushed through the doors at the opening of the store in Valley Stream, N.Y.

Police said the man, identified as 34-year-old Jdimytai Damour, was a temporary employee who lived in New York City's borough of Queens.

In addition, police officials said a pregnant woman was taken to a local hospital, but was expected to be released Friday.

Video footage showed as many as a dozen people knocked to the floor in the stampede of people trying to get into the Wal-Mart store, according to Nassau County Police detective Lt. Michael Fleming. The employee was "stepped on by hundreds of people" as other workers attempted to fight their way through the crowd, Fleming said.

"We expected a large crowd this morning and added additional internal security, additional third party security, additional store associates and we worked closely with the Nassau County Police," said Hank Mullany, Wal-Mart's vice president for the Northeast, in a statement. "Despite all of our precautions, this unfortunate event occurred."

"Our thoughts and prayers go out to the families of those impacted," he added, saying the company is cooperating with authorities in their investigation. ([Full story](#))

Around the nation, shoppers descended upon Wal-Mart ([WMT](#), [Fortune 500](#)) en masse in hopes of scoring Black Friday discounts. From New Jersey to Dallas, there were reports of

hundreds of shoppers lining up before stores opened, looking for \$2 DVDs and flat-panel TVs priced just under \$400.

At the Fairfax, Va., location, the scene was social. Hundreds queued up before doors opened at 5 a.m., with some having arrived the night before in order to be among the first to shop.

"We skipped Thanksgiving dinner," said 30-year-old Arash Habiezhadeh.

Wal-Mart, which operates more than 4,100 U.S. stores and 3,100 international locations, is expected to be a big winner this holiday season as its discounts resonate with budget-conscious shoppers. The company has been aggressively courting customers by lowering its prices and introducing holiday-gift sections in stores.

"Even with the economy, you've got to go with the deals," said Robert Balboni of Centreville, Va., while loading his shopping cart with a 42-inch flat panel TV, a portable DVD player and a Philips 2GB MP3 player.

Wal-Mart has already shown signs of benefiting from the economic slowdown. Same-store sales, or sales at retail stores open at least a year, gained 2.4% in October, beating the company's own forecast.

Overall, the U.S. retail sector is expected to endure one of its worst holiday seasons in years. Sales are projected to climb just 2.2%, according to the National Retail Federation, making it the weakest sales gain in six years.

Unfortunately, the holiday temp working at a Wal-Mart store near New York City drew the short straw and found out first hand what a stampede feels like. He obviously stood in the wrong place as the thousands of shoppers stormed the store at 5AM on Friday morning. I worked at a Wal-Mart store for 6 years and only once had the pleasure of witnessing the mad

rush enter the store in search of items at ridiculously low prices. What got me was the fact that once the employee was down, the herd did not stop but kept on going. When the store decided to shut down for rest of the day to investigate, shoppers were indifferent. Some had been standing in line since Thursday morning. All this for a \$9.00 Incredible Hulk DVD?

While I worked at a Wal-Mart, I had a very good friend who actually volunteered to unlock the door to release the hounds. Most brave on her part. Now, the last I knew, she is the Manager of the Automotive Department.

I learned of the tragedy on Friday when I ran into another person whom I worked with. She had just heard it on the news. There was also a pregnant woman who was knocked down and taken to be examined; however, she and the baby were uninjured. Perhaps [taylhis](#) was right in not venturing out into the battlefield?