

# Shoppers warned to be extra vigilant

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CHRISTMAS may be a time of joy and celebration, but it's also the opportune time for criminals to strike.

This is according to shopping malls and security companies who have warned shoppers to be extra vigilant over the festive period.

Marketing manager at La Lucia Mall, Katina Sideris, said criminals take advantage of the overcrowding caused by people rushing to get their Christmas shopping done early.

"The mall is expecting more than 600 000 shoppers this festive season.

"With everybody in relaxed mode, the Christmas period is the best time for opportunistic criminals to target shoppers," she said.

Sideris advised shoppers to keep their handbags zipped up, and not to leave them lying on the floor at their feet to avoid becoming victims of crime.

"Don't flash your cash or leave wallets and cellphones lying around on tables at coffee shops and restaurants. Avoid becoming a victim of crime simply by being aware wherever you go," she said.

But it is not only shoppers that are easy targets for criminals.

## Stolen

Reg Horne of security company Justicia Simunye warned that during the Christmas rush employees in small shops also had their personal belongings stolen.

"Because the stores get so busy and the sales assistants need to help their customers, they leave the counters, where their personal belongings are kept, unattended.

"Sales assistants' cellphones, handbags and wallets end up being taken," he said.

To avoid being robbed, Horne suggested that employees leave their personal belongings in locked cupboards that are out of sight.

Sales assistant at Abigale Silk in the Pavilion, Judy Perumal, has already fallen prey to criminals at the start of this busy period.

"Now that we open till late, the store gets really busy and during the rush someone stole my cellphone.

"I only realised that it was missing when I needed to call my husband to fetch me from work," said Perumal.

She said criminals would steal anything during this period.

"Two weeks ago they actually stole my cellphone charger.

"Now that just goes to show that you can't even trust a potential buyer as they may be just browsing to see what they can take," she said.