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prepared and shipped boxes at more than 10 times their normal rate for Cyber Monday.

Nov. 30, 2013

Last year, employees in the Colonial Williamsburg Foundation's distribution center prepared and shipped boxes at more than 10 times their normal rate for Cyber Monday.

“When I think about the 958 boxes we did on the Friday and Saturday before Cyber Monday to prepare, and the 910 boxes we did on Cyber Monday, it's just amazing,” said Roz Ramsey, manager of the distribution center.

The typical number of boxes prepared and shipped in a day at the Williamsburg warehouse? 150.

Cyber Monday sales are expected to increase by double-digits this year, according to predictions by consumer trend analysts at IBISWorld. That growth is, in part, due to the overall shift of shoppers from brick-and-mortar stores to online retailers, the IBISWorld report says.

Indeed, FedEx announced earlier this season that it expects Cyber Monday to be its busiest day of the year.

Best deals

Although shoppers will continue to see deals promoted as “doorbusters,” Cyber Monday still lags behind Black Friday as a day to get the deepest discounts on certain products.

Most deal experts agree that discounts on clothing and shoes are the highlight of

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Mark LoCastro, an expert with dealnews.com, agrees with Tietjens, saying Cyber Monday is a day for apparel.

“On Cyber Monday, you'll see significantly fewer tech deals (compared to Thanksgiving and Black Friday), but it's the undefeated heavyweight champion when it comes to clothing and shoe deals,” he says.

On the dealnews.com website, 32 percent of apparel deals were marked “Editors' Choice” — or the lowest price of the year — during Cyber Monday 2012 alone.

For the past two Cyber Mondays, dealnews editors saw an average of 45 percent more clothing deals than on Black Friday, and about 53 percent more deals than on Thanksgiving Day.

They also reported 50 percent more shoe deals on Cyber Monday than Black Friday or Thanksgiving.

Jerry Tietjens has a bit more faith in Cyber Monday than his brother, Mike.

“Due to what experts are predicting will be a fairly lackluster shopping season for retailers, maybe, just maybe more sites will be very aggressive in their pricing this Cyber Monday, as businesses see it as a second opportunity to sell everything under the sun,” he said.

Local deals

Cyber Monday is also a time for smaller online retailers to shine. They often get overlooked in the bustle of big-box Black Friday.

Employees are anticipating a record Cyber Monday at La Tienda, a Toano-based gourmet food retailer, said spokeswoman Laurie Hager.

“We are already seeing momentum building. It is such an exciting time of year,” she

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“There's nothing like being able to combine the convenience of online shopping, with the chance to handle, taste and smell the gifts being sent to family and friends across the country and to have every question answered in person by our La Tienda staff,” Hager said.

La Tienda's website offers a number of gift items not available in the retail store, so shoppers will have the advantage of an increased inventory, as well.

“We expect to pack more than 100,000 orders at (our) packing stations in Toano this year and will begin double shifts next week to keep up with holiday demand,” Hager said.

The Colonial Williamsburg Foundation is offering several deals this year, according to spokeswoman Barbara Brown.

Guest who book a stay of at least two consecutive nights in a suite at the Williamsburg Inn, Williamsburg Lodge, or Williamsburg Woodlands Hotel and Suites can get one of those nights free. The offer is valid on stays through March 31, 2014 and may be booked by phone at 1-855-296-6627 with the code CYBER.

In addition, the retail website williamsburgmarketplace.com/sale is offering 30 percent off all purchases plus free shipping on orders over \$49.

These offers are available now through 11:59 p.m. Monday, Dec. 2.

Colonial Williamsburg also is offering a buy-one-get-one-free deal on annual passes during the Black Friday, Cyber Monday shopping holidays.

The offer is available online only at colonialwilliamsburg.com/cyber. No code is needed.

The Gloucester-based retailer Peace Frogs began offering 20 percent off everything

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Smithfield Marketplace is offering 20 percent off a selection of 12 gifts and free shipping on those items for Cyber Monday. The affiliated store The Peanut Shop is offering a similar promotion, according to Alexa Ricketts, a spokeswoman for Smithfield Specialty Food Groups LLC.

Specific deals include a 2-pound holiday gift box for \$21.59 (regularly \$26.99) at The Peanut Shop's website, and a Country Ham and Biscuits Sampler for \$39.99 (regularly \$49.99) through the Smithfield Marketplace website.

To weed through the endless number of discounts, you need to do your research ahead of time. And you should know what the item normally costs, Jerry Tietjens said.

“Just because you see '50 percent off' doesn't mean it's the best price on the web. Check any deal site like ours, and you'll start to learn what you should be paying for something versus what retailers say you're 'saving,'" he said. “As a general rule of thumb, list price is a rarity online.”

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