

# Malls beef up security for festive heists spree

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EASTERN and Southern Cape shopping centres are radically toughening up on security measures for what could well be the worst festive season crime surge yet.

There have already been several robberies at shopping centres and business premises in the region in recent weeks and police and the security industry believe tough economic times could be a contributing factor.

While some centre managements are deploying additional security staff this December and January, others are hosting mobile police units at their centres to keep criminals at bay.

The SA Council of Shopping Cen-

tres (SACS) estimates shopping centre crime typically increases by about 20% over the holiday season.

However, they fear it could be even worse this year. In the Bay alone there have been at least two serious incidents during the past few weeks.

According to a national shopping centre security report there were 71 incidents of violent crime linked to shopping centres last December.

Police, security companies, centre management and tenants will work together closely to keep centres safer during December and January. Chairman of the Eastern Cape chapter of the SACS, Marios van Dongen, said the organisation had made festive season safety recommendations to the province's shopping centres.

He said centres and tenants should increase the number of security

guards, especially around bigger targets like banks and jewellery stores.

The manager of East London's Vincent Park, Joseph Parsley, said the centre was ready for the season with regard to safety. "We've had a tenants' meeting and educated them about how to react to various crimes, and we gave them some safety tips."

The centre has also appointed additional security staff. "We will have a mobile police unit in the mall."

Knysna's Woodmill Lane manager Bobbie Erfmann said the security team had revised emergency procedures and extra guards had been employed. "We've also ensured all panic buttons are working," said Erfmann.

Greenacres' centre manager Brent Starr said precautions included increasing the number of security guards, among other measures,

while Walmer Park spokesman Leon Scheepers said it too has appointed additional security officers and improved its CCTV camera systems.

Provincial police spokesman Captain Ernest Sigobe said police in the province would embark on operational duties during the festive season in all shopping malls by intensifying visible policing, doing foot patrols within the centres and conducting roadblocks within the province.

Atlas Security spokesman Gareth Wilson said officers would enhance their visibility at the centres. "We will also work closely with police."

