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## RETAIL ROUNDUP

By Paul Wahl, Editor

### Boom Time for Online

If there isn't much jingle in your cash register this holiday season, you might blame some of it on Online shopping. According to one estimate, Online shopping is expected to rise more than 25 percent over last year. A survey conducted by



MyPoints.com, a Web site for frequent shoppers, cites better prices than brick-and-mortar retailers as the main attraction. Web shoppers also like the convenience and the lack of crowds. Online retail sales for the fourth quarter of 2005 are expected to top \$26 billion, up 22 percent from last year. It could get worse. If gas prices stay high and the weather turns perverse, even more shoppers will take to their computers. PARTING SHOT: Note to self: Time to unveil my Web site.

### Another Gloomy Gus

BY THE TIME MOST RETAILERS read this column, they will be well into their holiday sales season and will probably have a good idea whether it's going to be a good one. Anyone still wondering might be interested to know that one organization believes hurricanes, high gas prices and continued hostilities abroad will form the perfect storm that devastates American retailers. Unity Marketing's Gift Tracker survey released in late October predicted that consumers would spend less on Christmas gifts this year over last year. The reason: All the bad news in recent months has left consumers feeling wrung out. The Unity survey said that the post-Christmas shopping period might start 2006 on a positive note, since gift card sales continue to rise.

PARTING SHOT: Surveys can be wrong. Unity admits that in 2004 consumers actually spent 22 percent more on Christmas gifts than they originally planned.

### Now Boarding: Changes Ahead?

RETAILERS WHO PLAN TO FLY to winter markets may discover that a window seat is worth more than just a bird's eye view of Earth below. A number of airlines have begun experimenting with alternative methods of boarding passengers, including boarding those with window seats first. The theory is that the bottleneck caused when someone sits in an aisle seat and then must move to allow the window seat passenger in would be eliminated. America West has already begun using the strategy, and other airlines are contemplating it, according to *The Wall Street Journal*. Scientists studying the situation aren't sure how much time the alternative method would save, but they are convinced that boarding from the rear of the plane "is almost certainly not the fastest way," says the Journal.

PARTING SHOT: A quicker boarding process might make for the elimination of free snacks and meals.

