

You better watch out!

Experts warn of increased attacks on businesses and shoppers during the coming festive season's shopping

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WITH a 49% increase in the number of cash-in-transit heists countrywide in the past eight months and an average of 57 armed robberies against businesses daily, an increase in cash crimes is expected to rise this festive season.

Yesterday, Cash Connect, the largest supplier of cash to the banking sector in the country, said about R41m was lost in cash heists and business robberies between September 1 and November 6. It warned retailers and business owners to be prepared for a spike in crime.

Richard Phillips, joint CEO of the company, said cash attracts crime and as consumers spend more on festive season shopping, South Africans should best be prepared for a significant increase in criminal activity.

"Business owners must expect a rise in armed robberies, cash in transit heists, burglaries and bombings of cash devices at this time. Criminals have their own festive season wish list and are ruthless in getting what they're after," he said.

There is an almost 40% increase in the volume of cash held onsite during December, compared to during the year. "Extended trading hours create greater opportunity for crime spikes, holiday makers, fuel retailers and



CASH WARNING: Cash in transit heists are expected to increase this festive season given the trends this year.

convenience store owners are most exposed, while the hardest hit areas are retail hubs and coastal towns," he said.

Phillips said retailers can protect their

cash, staff and customers.

"The most important and effective way to do so is by installing an automated retail cash management and pay-

ment solution and outsourcing your cash management and payments requirements to professionals. And make sure to use suppliers who make use of cash

vaults that are robust enough to resist the toughest of attacks," he said.

Businesses that have not yet invested in automation should take precautions such as making use of electronic transfers to pay salaries and wages and to not make it known when cash will be taken to the bank for deposit.

"We know we are in for a tough time. Cash crime season in South Africa has historically been the April and December holiday periods. The fact that attacks have increased dramatically this year is an indication of what we can expect over the next few months. Retailers will do well to prepare themselves in order to reduce their risk," Phillips said.

Last month South African Banking Risk Information Centre (Sabric) expressed concern at the high number of violent cash-in-transit heists this year.

Sabric said that despite implementing necessary measures, cash in transit vehicles are still attacked by large groups of between 15 and 20 criminals, all heavily armed with automatic rifles.

Meanwhile, Gauteng Community Safety received R27.5m, of which R9m has been allocated to road safety awareness campaigns over the festive season and R8.5m will be used to install number plate recognition equipment in the vehicles of traffic officers.

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