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Retailers Are Revealing Their After-Christmas Sales

By Mary Ellen Lloyd and Karen Talley

NEW YORK (Dow Jones)--Retailers all holiday season have unveiled deals earlier than they have in years past, and after-Christmas sales will apparently be no exception.

Wal-Mart Stores Inc. (WMT) will offer electronics and toys at prices carrying heavier discounts than they did before the holidays.

The nation's biggest retailer wants to provide "additional savings for items that customers will be looking for after Christmas," said Wal-Mart spokeswoman Melissa O'Brien.

Wal-Mart will have the usual post-Christmas goods to clear out--wrapping paper, ribbons and ornaments. The retailer, however, in a press release to be issued this week, touts deeper savings on toys and consumer electronics as part of its post-Christmas sale. Callouts include an eMachine 250-gigabyte netbook for \$228, almost \$150 less than a comparable netbook by Acer that Wal-Mart is currently carrying. Wal-Mart is also extending previously announced holiday deals, such as its selection of top Blu-ray movies for under \$20.

Best Buy Co. (BBY) on Tuesday announced several computer deals it will offer online starting Christmas Day and in stores on Saturday, including a Lenovo netbook for \$197--more than \$100 off. It also outlined computer specials through Jan. 2 "for those with gift cards in hand."

This is the first year Best Buy has advertised post-Christmas offers with a press release ahead of time, although the practice has been a standard one this holiday season since before Black Friday, the company said in an email statement.

"Gift cards have been popular for Best Buy this season, and we thought it made sense to reference their use for these deals come Christmas Day and after," Best Buy said.

A RadioShack Corp. (RSH) spokeswoman said its online Christmas Day deals will soon be announced and include free shipping on thousands of products, as well as deals on mobile-navigation devices, cameras and accessories. RadioShack's 48-hour sale after Christmas will feature free phones across all carriers with a two-year agreement, as well as specials on music and phone accessories.

The early after-Christmas promotions are not confined to electronics retailers.

J.C. Penney Co. (JCP) on Monday outlined numerous sale items for Saturday, with stores opening at 5 a.m.: the earliest post-Christmas opening in the company's history stretching back more than 100 years.

J.C. Penney's offerings include an "after-Christmas wake-up call" that customers can sign up for and receive on their mobile phone. The retailer said its offerings will include over 100 "doorbusters," new merchandise in its teen departments and a white sale for such items as pillows and sheets.

J.C. Penney will also be extending hours on Sunday, Dec. 27, with stores opening at 9 a.m. and closing at 7 p.m.

"Historically, the day after Christmas is a big promotion day," said Joe Feldman, a retail analyst at Telsey Advisory Group. "But to telegraph exactly what the promotion is this early is unusual. The ads usually start coming out on Christmas Day."

Retailers appear to be repeating their approach to Black Friday by getting their ads out early. But last year, merchandise was broadly marked down after Christmas as stores tried to rid themselves of excess goods.

On the heels of last year, the worst Christmas buying season on record, it appears the promotions are more planned.

"Inventories have been pretty lean coming into the holiday season, so I don't see that sense of panic the way we did around this time last year," Feldman said.