



## PRESS RELEASE

**For Immediate Release**  
**November 24, 2023**

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### **Merchants Urged to Take Precautions regarding Patrons and Merchandise During Holiday Season 2023**

The official kick-off of the Christmas Holiday shopping season has begun as individuals are out and about looking to purchase the latest and greatest gifts at bargain prices. Merchants are stocking their warehouses and stores with large quantities of merchandise for an anticipated busy shopping period. Chief Tom LaBelle, of the Prince William County Fire and Rescue System, would like to remind merchants to take the following necessary precautions in protecting their patrons and merchandise during this holiday season:

#### **Storing Merchandise**

- Keep all exits, exit pathways, and exit discharges clear of merchandise and other items. This includes stock rooms, display floor, and corridors.
- Keep access to all Fire and Life Safety system controls (Sprinkler and Fire Alarm) clear.
- Keep storage levels 18 inches from sprinkler heads.
  - If no sprinkler system, keep merchandise 2 feet from ceiling and overhead support assembly.
- Manage and reduce trash, debris, and combustibles actively throughout events and store hours. **DO NOT** allow combustibles to pile up. This may exceed the capacity of the sprinkler system and increase the risk of fire.

#### **Customer Safety**

- Monitor the crowds to maintain the proper occupancy load so that the possibility of overcrowding is eliminated.
- Ensure the safety and security of patrons lined up for the "big sale." This means keeping access and emergency egress open for guests and first responders. **DO NOT BLOCK** Fire Lanes and entrances/exits. Have crowd managers on site to help manage the flow and direct first responders should an incident occur.
- **DO NOT BLOCK** extinguishers or access to sprinkler system control valves.
- Limit decorations to ensure sprinkler system coverage is not reduced.
- All decorations must be treated with a fire retardant.
- Provide awareness regarding **NO PARKING** in fire lanes.
- Provide awareness regarding **DO NOT BLOCK** fire department connections and hydrants.

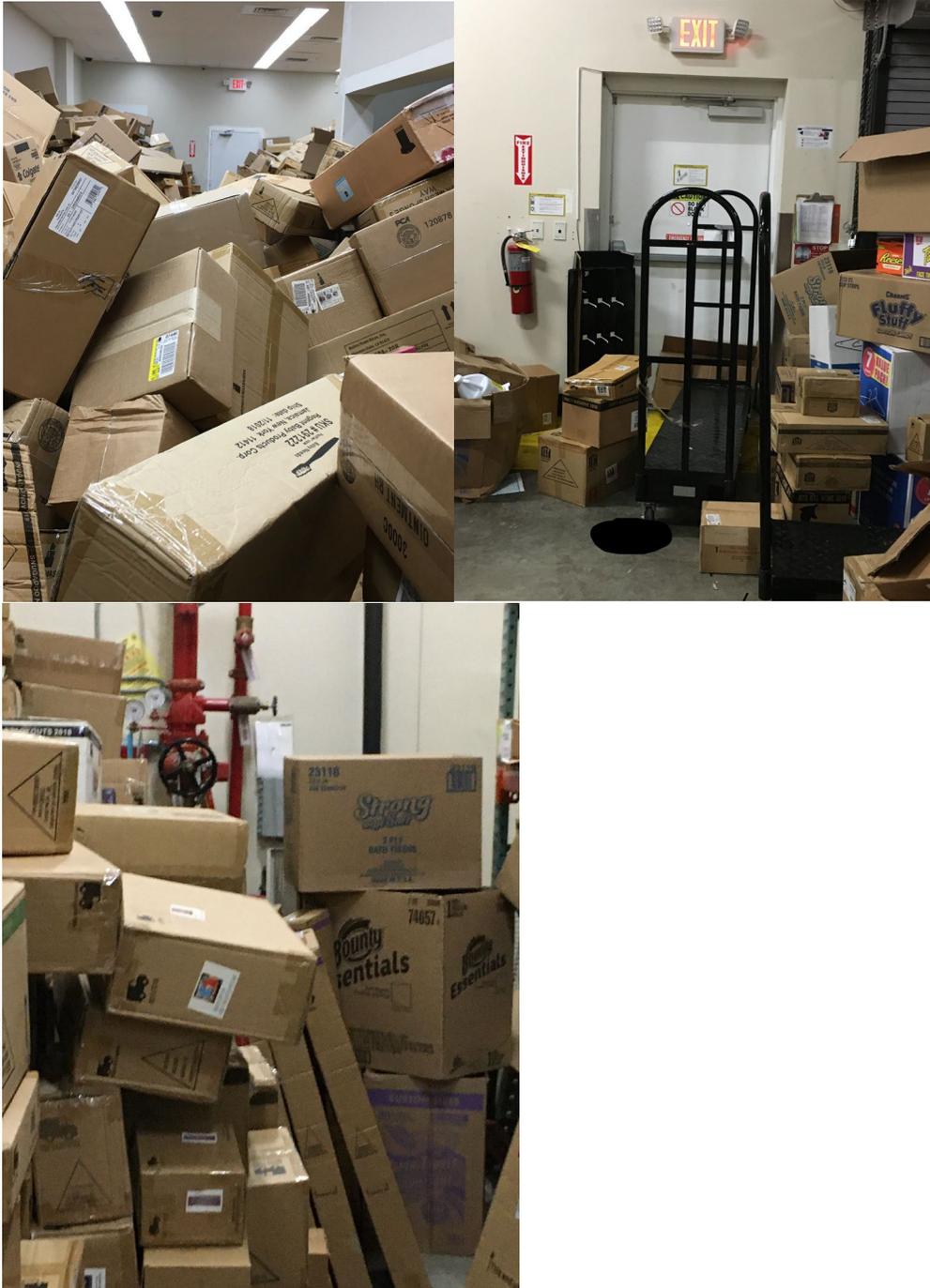
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To ensure these threats are reduced, the County's Fire Marshals will conduct spot checks throughout the holiday shopping season to ensure a fire safe community. If you have any questions, please contact the Fire Marshal's Office at 703-792-6360.



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