

Police step up holiday patrols at Mesa Riverview

Katie McDevitt, Tribune
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To stealthy criminals, more holiday shoppers equals more potential victims. But in Mesa, police hope a certain shopping center won't become too tempting to thieves. Today officers will begin cruising on bikes and patrolling in cars at Mesa Riverview.

Police beef up mall patrols

Four officers will be specifically assigned to the shopping center, located on Dobson Road south of Loop 202, through New Year's Day to help deter thefts and vehicle burglaries, and respond to any crimes that occur.

"We don't have any major problems, but we want to make sure there aren't any problems popping up," said Mesa police Commander Tony Lythgoe.

On Wednesday, Mesa police officer Nikolas Rasheta and crime prevention officer Patty Gallagher walked through the large shopping center and distributed fliers to businesses that would remind customers to lock car doors.

"We're asking all the stores to put these in their windows," Gallagher told employees in each business. "We've only had one vehicle burglary in the last month, but we want to make sure more don't happen."

Detective Chris Arvayo, a police spokesman, said Mesa Riverview will be handled similarly to Superstition Springs Center around the holidays, with bicycle officers, cops in cars and even some patrolling on foot.

Officials said when the Waveyard water park is built in the area, even more officers will need to be assigned to the beat.

After the holiday patrols, police will determine what their longer-term staffing needs at Riverview will be.



THWARTING THIEVES: Mesa police crime prevention officer Patty Gallagher, left, and officer Nikolas Rasheta hand out fliers while talking with Jo-Ann merchandise manager Debra Moore in the Mesa Riverview shopping center.

Tim Hacker, Tribune

“The whole point of it (now) is to have a high visibility and availability to the folks out there, so when the people are out there doing their shopping they are safe,” Lythgoe said.

Catherine Blatchford, 40, of Mesa, who was loading groceries into her car near Wal-Mart on Wednesday, said she thinks an increased police presence would not only help her feel safe, but also would keep the area clean.

“Unfortunately we’re not in the best area,” Blatchford said. “You hear stories of women getting accosted in the car.”

She added that shopping centers generally attract groups of teenagers, so she hopes that police will help monitor the situation should large numbers of teens start hanging around.