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adding that area police departments have apparently updated their inventory recently.

Army surplus stores aren't the only businesses that are ringing in the new year with the sounds of cash registers opening and closing.

Preparing for it

Customers preparing for Y2K are also putting dollars in the pockets of local business people who are selling everything from cords of wood to prescription

drugs and bottled water.

For instance, homeowners buying wood are up 30 to 40 percent from this time last year, according to John Steinkopf, of Steinkopf Nursery in Farmington Hills.

"It's hard to keep it in stock right now," said Steinkopf, adding that cords sell for \$75 each not including delivery.

Dan Mosher, manager of Livonia True Value Hardware, said the fireplace department in his store has had the highest volume



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Gas logs, kerosene heaters, oil lamps, and generators that start

of traffic recently.

"Wood burning stoves are becoming more popular," he said. "But I have a feeling that after the first of the year it will go bye-bye. Kerosene heaters had all but died out, and they came back."

Gas logs, kerosene heaters, oil lamps, and generators that start

ed to Y2K, like "Y2K, The Millennium Bug," and commemorative millennium tomes, like "Century" by Peter Jennings are selling quickly, according to store manager Andie Brock.

Chris Kulesa, a bookseller at Waldenbooks in Livonia, said he fielded only a few calls from people looking for Y2K survival tip books.

Water sales flow

Across town in Plymouth, however, the story is different. While

he didn't say exactly how much sales have increased, William Patrick, vice-president of retail sales at Abepure Water Co. in Plymouth, reported a significant rise in orders from this time last year.

"We are warehousing the product in the event that orders will go even higher as we get closer to the end of the year," Patrick said. "We have a lot of grocery store chains getting ready for December and individuals who are ordering larger amounts than normal and we're getting prepared to meet those needs."

Joe Belloni, assistant manager of Office Depot in Livonia, said customers aren't rushing in to buy new computers. But, they are stocking up on bottled water, toilet paper and computer programs that claim to detect whether or not computers are Y2K compliant. They cost between \$15 and \$35.

Since no one really knows exactly what will happen when midnight strikes, it's hard to say how effective the software checks are, Belloni said.

"Honestly, I think it's (the Y2K scare) is a bunch of bunk," he added.

While arguments can be made that we can survive without computers, living without food is impossible. By mid-November people weren't running to their grocers to stock pile food.

Jim Swoboda, Spartan Stores' director of strategic business development based in Grand Rapids, said there was an increase in bottled water sales during the summer that the company attributes to Y2K concerns. The company supplies independent retail grocery stores throughout Michigan, northern Indiana and northern Ohio.

"It's not happening now," he said. "The news has been good about Y2K and every system that has come to a critical date has all passed with flying colors. Y2K is already upon us. A lot of things have forced 2000 to be on dates and they're working just fine."

Stocking up vs. hoarding

Food suppliers' biggest concern is if people decide to hoard.

"If business goes on as normal, from a consumer buying perspective, everything should be fine," Swoboda said. "And every indication is that is what they're doing and we applaud them for that."

Aside from warmth and water, the next most important necessity is medication. "Yes, there is an increase, but it's really, really tiny," explained Philip Kraft, Medi-mart pharmacist in Westland.

"In the last week, I got two calls about it," Kraft said. "One woman wanted a three month supply. I think it's (problems caused by Y2K) imagined and the media would like to create something happening."

Sav-Mor Westland Maple Drugs pharmacist Charles Cavanaugh reported a larger increase in orders.

"I believe we're getting people who are stocking up, but I don't believe it's necessary," he said. "I don't believe there will be a problem. It's mostly the elderly being afraid. I really couldn't put a number to it. But it certainly is there. I've been trying to allay their fear that there will be a problem."

If Y2K does cause problems, making sure that you're linked to the right person might be another concern. Robert Burger of Cameo Wedding Chapel in Plymouth, has seen an increase in calls from people wanting to get married in November and December.

"I don't know if it has anything to do with Y2K, or not," he said, adding, however, that it is unusual to get a high volume of calls for weddings near the end of the year.

While some people are legitimately making money on Y2K concerns, others are pulling off scams. One of the most popular involves telephone calls from people saying they are from the customer's bank or credit card company and they need account numbers to either transfer money or change data.

Experts recommend never providing personal information, especially credit card, bank account or Social Security numbers over the telephone unless you're familiar with the company or you initiated the call.

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