

Vancouver International Airport is asking travellers not to include wrapped Christmas gifts as carry-on luggage as they have to be scanned at security and may have to be unwrapped. Instead, the airport is offering complimentary gift-wrapping services past the security check-in. **METRO NEWS SERVICES**

Don't bring wrapped presents on board, airport staff warn

Thieves lift MIT student's laptop — and thesis

A 23-year-old aeronautics student's academic future is up in the air after his laptop — which contained his master's degree research — was stolen from a backpack he left in his car at Burnaby Lake, B.C.

"I was just devastated," said Russell Stratton, who's

home for the holidays between finishing a master's program at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology in Cambridge and applying to a PhD program.

"I have (some of the work) backed up, but there's probably 50 or 60 hours of work in there."

Stratton had gone to his

mother's choir show on Sunday night and left his work in his car. When he came out afterward, his car window was smashed and the backpack was gone.

"It had (my) textbooks, all my handwritten notes from throughout my degree, notes I made from studying for exams — which I need

Information

• Anyone with information can email Stratton at rwstrat@mit.edu or call him at 857-523-9343.

to write to get in the PhD program in January," Stratton said.

Also gone was his laptop, which had the research he needed to get into the PhD program, and \$150 in cash — a Christmas gift from his dad.

Stratton's father returned to the park yesterday and found the backpack in a dumpster, along with the textbooks and notes. There

was no sign of the computer.

He said it's not about the money, but the work — which is useless to anyone who isn't interested in aircraft design and aeronautics — and he'd be happy just to get the hard drive back.

**KRISTEN THOMPSON/
METRO VANCOUVER**

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HOPE AND GOODWILL
COMES BOLD,
TALL OR NO WHIP.**

STARBUCKS COFFEE

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Shoppers go online to avoid holiday crowds

SEAN KOLENKO
for Metro Vancouver

The normally hectic Vancouver malls and streets were a little quieter this holiday season, and online shopping may be to blame.

The prospect of avoiding long lines, expensive parking and high postage costs for sending presents to distant loved ones had some Vancouverites turning to their computers to aid their gift-buying needs.

"I'm from Dublin, so online shopping is just easier," said Richard Wallace. "And they take care of the delivery. Canada Post would only guarantee on-time delivery before Dec. 1."

While Wallace did most of his shopping via the Internet, he was forced to send a few items the traditional route.

"I did send some pres-

"I did send some presents in the mail and paid \$500. That's twice what they were worth."

Richard Wallace

ents in the mail and paid \$500. That's twice what they were worth."

Keira Dimoff also shopped online this season. She likes the convenience it affords her.

"I was able to stay at home instead of running across town on my day off," she said. "And I still got exactly what I was looking for."

Amazon Canada spokesperson Sally Fouts said her company has been busy for weeks.

"It's definitely always our peak time of year, but this year has been a crazy one," she said.

Pit bull shot after attacking police dog

ANIMALS Mounties shot and killed a pit bull after it attacked a police dog in Chilliwack yesterday.

According to RCMP, officers were conducting a training exercise in the 46000 block of Fifth Avenue when a pit bull left an unfenced neighbouring yard and attacked the police dog, biting it on the throat.

Officers were unable to

separate the two dogs and shot the pit bull because the police dog was suffocating and was in danger of dying.

Victim Services were called to the scene to provide support to the dog's owner.

An investigation will examine the degree of force used and whether it was lawful and within RCMP policy. **METRO VANCOUVER**

News in brief

PULP MILL A tax standoff between Castlegar and its biggest employer may be over. The Zellstoff Celgar pulp mill has decided to start paying its municipal taxes after claiming it's being charged unfair tax rates while being hammered by the recession. The company is making an immediate payment of about \$470,000.

BACON Fraud charges against alleged gangster Jonathan Bacon have been thrown out of court. Crown prosecutors made the decision, believing the charges would not have re-

sulted in a conviction. Bacon was charged after a car was leased using false documents. Bacon's co-accused in the case, Dennis Karbovanec, is in jail for his role in the Surrey Six killings.

CRASH RCMP in Kamloops have released the name of a 14-year-old boy who was killed on Sunday in a head-on collision on Highway 5. Nathan Floyd was pronounced dead at Royal Inland Hospital. Police are investigating the cause of the crash.

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