

EXCLUSIVE: Snow not Scrooge for jewelers this season

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New York—While retailers and consumers in the Northeast battled the weekend's icy weather, most of the jewelers who spoke to *National Jeweler* today said they have been unaffected by Mother Nature's wintry wrath so far this holiday season, with business continuing as usual.

Anshus Jewelers in Menomonie, Wis., located east of St. Paul in northern Wisconsin, was too far north to have been affected by the weekend's wintry mix, storeowner John Anshus said.

Anshus described the weekend as overcast, but said in general, "the weather wasn't bothering us."

Anshus said his store had a strong year in 2006, and that the season so far this year is going well.

"I think we're pretty much average," he said. "We're doing as well as expected with today's economy."

Among Anshus Jewelers' most consistent sellers this weekend was gold jewelry. Although this might be surprising given gold's current high price, Anshus attributes the sales to his store being in business for a long time and his stock of gold jewelry in the \$300 to \$400 price range. Because of this stock, the store can afford to sell at comparatively lower prices.

Further south in Lexington, Ky., Bill Farmer Jr. of Farmer's Jewelry said Midwesterners were hit by a big storm about three years back, so in comparison, the weekend ice storm didn't faze them.

"We got the back edge of it and a lot of worried weathermen," he said.

Farmer said sales for the weekend were consistent in two areas: Honora pearl jewelry and Wideband jewelry, which includes museum-quality replica coin jewelry as well as ancient coin jewelry. Honora sells, Farmer said, because "it's fashion, it's price points, it's easy for people in a certain budget." Farmer said Honora pearls can run anywhere from \$20 to \$250, while Wideband sells for \$200 to \$800.

As for the "big stuff," as Farmer put it, diamond studs were hot sellers, with princess cuts moving in addition to rounds.

Over on the West Coast, weather conditions were not an issue for retailers, though the same can't be said for weeks past.

Steven Goldfarb of Alvin Goldfarb Jeweler in Bellevue, Wash., said sales this weekend as compared with last year were very strong.

"Saturday felt like Christmas, finally," he said. "I think people suddenly realized there's only one week left."

While the weather in the Bellevue area over the past few days has been in the 40s with rain showers, it's par for the course in Washington State at this time. Unusually strong rains further south of Bellevue two weeks ago, however, shut down Interstate 5, one of the state's main highways, Goldfarb said. Luckily, the storm didn't cause problems for store traffic.

A year ago, though, it was a windstorm that did some damage to the area, knocking out power. Alvin Goldfarb Jeweler

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