



Watch Works

Charles County Sheriff's Office

Sheriff Troy Berry
November 2015

Let the Shopping Begin

- It's that time of year again! What's for Thanksgiving dinner and then the Christmas shopping list. Some people dread this time of year. Crowded malls and people in a hurry. Others like the Christmas music, smell of pinecones and looking for the best deals. **If you aren't one of those that do all your shopping on the internet, here are a few safety tips:**
- Do not buy more than you can carry. Plan ahead by taking a friend with you or ask a store employee to help you carry your packages to the car.
- Save all receipts. Check your credit card and bank statements as they come in.
- Consider alternate options to pay for your merchandise, such as onetime or multiuse disposable credit cards or money orders, at online stores and auction sites.
- Wait until asked before talking out your credit card or checkbook.
- Tell a security guard or store employee if you see an unattended bag or package.
- Carry your purse inside a coat, close to your body.
- Have your keys in hand when approaching your vehicle. Check the back seat and around the car before getting in.
- Do not leave packages visible through your car windows. Lock them in the trunk or, if possible, take them directly home.
- If you are shopping with children, make a plan in case you are separated from each other. Teach them to know they can ask mall personnel or store security employees if they need help.

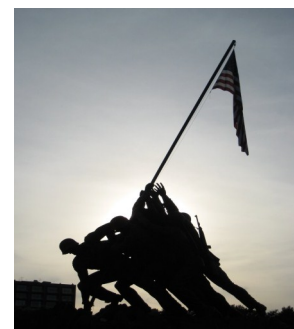
If you use the internet for shopping:

- Secure your personal computers by updating your security software. Everyone's computer should have anti-virus, anti-spyware, and anti-spam software as well as a good firewall installed.
- Keep your personal information private and your password secure. Do not respond to requests to "verify" your password or credit card information unless you initiated the contact.
- Beware of "bargains" from companies with whom you are unfamiliar—if it sounds too good to be true, it probably is!
- Use secure websites for purchases. Look for the icon of a locked padlock at the bottom of the screen or "https" in the URL address.

Dates to Remember

November 11: Veterans Day

November 26: Thanksgiving



Happy Thanksgiving



See Something.....Say Something

During your holiday shopping and home decorating, keep your eyes open for suspicious happenings. If you see something that doesn't look right at the mall or in the parking lot, report it. There are Mall

Police or dial the non-emergency number for the Charles County Sheriff's Office 301-932-2222 and let them know what you have seen. If you are on the roof hanging lights, look around

your neighborhood and see if anything looks odd or out of place. Give the Sheriff's Office a call and let them check it out. Be safe and look out for one another.



Real vs Artificial Christmas Trees

Ok, it's time to get serious. This debate goes on every year. Just a few decades ago, displaying a Christmas tree in your living room was one option: a pine or fir tree. That all changed when a U.S. based toilet bowl brush manufacturer, the Addis Brush Company, created an artificial tree from brush bristles in the 1930's, acting as the prototype for modern artificial trees.

Pros and Cons of Artificial Christmas Trees:

The thought of cutting down a new tree each year can be inconvenient, costly and a mess dragging home and into the house. An artificial tree doesn't need to be watered and doesn't leave needles all over the floor. Some even worry about the impact to the environment.

But many believe artificial trees actually have a greater negative environmental im-

pact. Today's artificial trees are typically manufactured with metal and a non-biodegradable petroleum-derived plastic. Artificial trees are non-recyclable which means they will sit in a landfill for centuries after disposal. Approximately 85 percent of artificial trees sold in the U.S. are imported from China according to the National Christmas Tree Association (NCTA).

The Pros and Cons of Real Christmas Trees:

Approximately 33 million real Christmas trees are sold in North America each year, according to the U.S. EPA. About 93 percent of those trees are recycled. Christmas trees are recycled into mulch and used in landscaping and gardening or chipped and used for playground material, hiking trails, paths and walkways. According to

the NCTA, the Christmas tree industry employs more than 100,000 Americans, an important economic consideration in the real versus artificial debate. Go one step further, how about a living, potted tree for Christmas. Living trees are brought in to the home and then replanted after Christmas. If you don't have the land for replanting, your local parks department will likely accept your tree for planting after the holidays.

So what's the final verdict? It's really up to you. Busy lifestyle, convenience of packing it away another year. No space to pack a tree away. Love the smell of a fresh tree, but don't like to have to water it or pick up needles on the floor. I guess there is no real answer. Christmas trees in your home make it festive for the holidays. I'm sure you'll make a good choice.



Do you know the difference?

Winter Storm Outlook

Winter storm conditions are possible in the next 2 to 5 days.

Winter Weather Advisory

Winter weather conditions are expected to cause significant inconveniences and

may be hazardous. When caution is used, these situations should not be life threatening.

Winter Storm Watch:

Winter storm conditions are possible within the next 36 to 48 hours.

Winter Storm Warning:

Life-threatening, severe winter conditions have begun or will begin within 24 hours. People in a warning area should take precautions immediately.





A word from your Community Organizer: Connie Gray.....301-932-3080

Looks like everywhere you go pumpkins are gone and Christmas trees are up. I even started Christmas information in this issue. That's only because lots of people (me included) put their Christmas tree up on Thanksgiving or the day after. I wanted to get the safety tips out before they were all up and decorated.

I love the holiday season. I also love wearing loose sweaters so I can enjoy the baked or fried apples, pumpkin pies, apple pies and any other seasonal foods. As the weather gets colder people seem to get nicer. Maybe it's because they just got in from the cold and are thankful to be warm. Whatever the rea-

son, wouldn't it be nice to have a little of the holiday spirit all year round. Look out for your neighbor or your fellow shopper. Don't turn you head and look the other way. Let someone know if someone needs help or is in a difficult situation. That's what it's all about.



Bright lights everywhere

Homes are lit up with bright lights. Candles in the windows and lights on the Christmas tree.

- Indoors or outside, use only lights that have been tested for safety. Identify these by the label from an independent testing laboratory.
- Check each set of lights, new or old for broken or cracked sockets, frayed or bare wires, or loose connections. Discard damaged sets or repair them before using.
- Fasten outdoor lights securely to trees, house, walls or other firm support to protect from wind damage.
- Use no more than three standard size sets of lights per single ex-

tension cord.

- Turn off all lights on trees and other decorations when you go to bed or leave the house. Lights could short and start a fire.
 - Never use electric lights on a metallic tree. The tree can become charged with electricity from faulty lights, and any person touching a branch could be electrocuted! To avoid this danger, use colored spotlights above or beside a tree, never fastened onto it!
 - Keep "bubbling" lights away from children. These lights with their bright colors and bubbling movement can tempt curious children to break candle-shaped glass, which can cut,
- and attempt to drink liquid, which contains a hazardous chemical.
 - Never use lighted candles on a tree or near other evergreens.
 - Always use non-flammable holders.
 - Keep candles away from other decorations and wrapping paper.
 - Place candles where they cannot be knocked down or blown over.
 - Before lighting any fire, remove all greens, boughs, papers, and other decorations from fireplace area. Check to see that the flue is open. Keep a screen before the fireplace all the time a fire is burning.





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Sheriff's Office**

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