



Watch Works

Charles County
Sheriff's Office

Sheriff Troy Berry
December 2015

Sleigh Bells and Safety Tips *A Message from the Sheriff Wishing You a Safe Holiday Season*

Christmas is upon us! This is a wonderful season of joy, family and tradition, but for most it also means shopping and traveling. Unfortunately, the latter two provide a means for criminals to take advantage of unsuspecting victims.

This holiday season, please be extra cautious and remember these 10 holiday safety tips:

- 1. Get to know your neighbors.** The holidays are a great time to get to know the people in your neighborhood. Neighbors who look out for each other and report suspicious activity make their communities safer.
- 2. Use caution in parking lots.** Park in a well-lit area and keep your keys in your hand. Lock your car and hide your valuables. Be aware of your surroundings and keep an eye out for suspicious individuals.
- 3. Shop with friends.** There is safety in numbers. Arrange to shop with friends and relatives instead of going out alone.
- 4. Pay close attention to your children.** When shopping with children, keep a close eye on them at all times. Consider coaching them to go to a store clerk or security guard if they become separated from you, and be sure they know their first and last name so they can advise someone who they are. Give children a contact phone number that they can carry on their person in case they do become lost.
- 5. If shopping online, make sure to have a security suite installed.** Online shopping is increasingly popular. The Internet does have risks, so it is important to take steps to protect yourself when shopping online. The National Cyber Security Alliance recommends that you make sure you have a security suite (firewall, anti-virus and anti-spyware) installed and updated with the most current information before shopping online. Also, keep your operating system and Web browser up-to-date.
- 6. Use caution when providing personal or financial information online.** Before providing personal or financial information, check the website's privacy policy. Make sure you understand how your information will be stored and used. Never send cash through the mail or use a money-wiring service. Print and save records of your online transactions. Check your credit card statements to make sure there are no unauthorized charges. If there is a discrepancy, report it immediately.
- 7. Secure your home when leaving for any length of time.** Lock your windows, sliders and doors. Set indoor and outdoor lights on timers, and perhaps set your television or radio on a timer to make it appear as if someone is home. Do not keep gifts or valuable objects in plain view from any window. Close blinds, shutters, drapes and curtains, and do not feel obligated to answer your door to anyone that you don't recognize.
- 8. Let someone know when you are traveling.** Inform a family member or friend that you trust where you will be and when you will return. Ask a trustworthy neighbor to keep an eye on your house.
- 9. Celebrate responsibly.** We understand that many celebrate this season at holiday parties with family, friends, and coworkers. Enjoy responsibly so that this time of joy does not become a time of tragedy. Designate a sober driver.
- 10. Stay informed.** Follow the CCSO on Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram for information all year round. You should also subscribe to the Citizen's Notification System (CNS) for alerts such as traffic and weather. Sign up at www.CharlesCountyMD.gov/CNS.

As always, if you see something, please say something. For a non-emergency or suspicious activity, call 301-932-2222. In the event of an emergency, call 911.

We hope you all have a Merry Christmas, Happy New Year, and all of the blessings that this season can bring.

-Sheriff Troy D. Berry

Dates to Remember

December 7: Pearl Harbor Remembrance Day

December 21: Winter begins

December 25: Christmas

December 31: New Year's Eve



Is your vehicle winter ready?



Don't leave it to chance that your vehicle is winter ready.

- Make sure the heater and defroster are in good working condition not only for your comfort but for visibility.
- Replace old blades regularly. Stock up on windshield washer solvent, you'll be surprised how much you use during the winter months.
- Don't forget to always carry an ice scraper in your vehicle.
- Have your battery checked. The only accurate way to detect a weak battery is with professional equipment.
- Inspect all lights and bulbs. Replace burned out bulbs and periodically clean road grime from

all lenses.

- Worn tires are dangerous in winter weather. Examine tires for remaining tread life, uneven wearing, and check the sidewalls for cuts and nicks. Check tire pressure once a month.
- Have your brakes checked periodically for safety and to prevent costly repairs that can be caused by neglect.
- Exhaust fumes inside your vehicle's cabin can be deadly. Have the exhaust system examined for leaks and problems while the vehicle is on a lift.
- Extra gloves and hat
- A blanket
- Extra water and food
- Flashlight
- Windshield washer fluid
- Windshield wipers
- Flares
- Jumper cables
- Tool kit
- A spare tire and working jack
- First aid kit
- Paper towels
- Bag of abrasive material such as sand, salt or non-clumping kitty litter.
- Keep the gas tank full.

Always carry an emergency kit with you:

Beware of Mortgage Fraud

- Don't become a victim. Spot the red flags of Mortgage Fraud.
- Do not respond to offers that promise "No Credit, No Problem" or "No Down Payment."
- Refuse to falsify your income or make misleading statements on
- lending statements or loan documents.
- Never sign a blank document or a document that contains blank lines.
- Read your contracts thoroughly and understand what you are signing.
- Research the latest mortgage scams and how to avoid them.
- Do not respond to pressure to sign documents before you are ready.
- To learn more about mortgage fraud, visit www.ncpc.org

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

Christmas! What's the first thing that comes to mind when you hear the word Christmas? Presents, Christmas carols, crowded stores? I always think of family and friends. The family I was born with, my work family and all those I have met in our neighborhoods that I consider my friends. I am so blessed to have all kinds of people in my life. Big, small, old or young they are all unique in

their own way, each has brought something different to my life. It's the end of the year and no one knows what next year will bring. I think this is a good time to reflect on the past year and those who made it a great year. Remember those this time of year that may have had a rough year. Maybe a death in the family or someone has lost a job or their home. These are the loved ones or acquaintances that

will need your friendship and kindness this time of year. Remember all the elderly in the nursing homes just waiting for a smile and a Christmas greeting. If you just take one hour out of your Christmas schedule and give it to a needy person I guarantee it will make your Christmas that much more special.

MERRY CHRISTMAS MY FRIENDS!!



Traveling over the holidays?

How exciting, traveling to visit family and friends for the holidays. As the time to go draws near be mindful of actions that will make your holiday travel more enjoyable.

- Before you start your trip, make sure your vehicle is tuned up and in good shape for travel.
- Restrain yourself and your passengers properly in seat belts and car safety seats. Remember, the rear seat is the safest place for children of any age to ride.
- Be flexible in setting your travel plans. Leave early if you can to avoid the peak traffic hours. If snow is predicted during the time you plan to travel, change your schedule.
- Stay fresh and alert when driving. Take plenty of breaks and do not push yourself to meet an unrealistic schedule. If you get tired, pull over and rest or let someone else drive for a while.
- Give yourself plenty of time and distance to react to the traffic around you. Let the impatient and aggressive drivers pass you or go through the intersection ahead of you so that you control the situation.
- Do not pass if you cannot see enough clear road to pass safely.
- If there will be drinking at your holiday get-together, choose a designated driver who will remain alcohol free.
- Cell phone use while driving is against the law in many areas. Pull off the road if you have to use your cell phone.
- Know your roadside assistance numbers, including the number to call if you need help and your policy number.
- Don't travel if you're sick. For your sake and the sake of others, if you aren't feeling good, stay home. Your loved ones will understand and you'll be able to see them again next holiday season.





**Charles County
Sheriff's Office**

**6915 Crain Hwy.
P.O. Box 189
La Plata, Md. 20646**

**301-932-2222
301-932-3080**

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**Watch Works is a publication of the Charles
County Crime Watch Program. For more
information contact Connie Gray 301-932-3080 or
grayc@ccso.us**