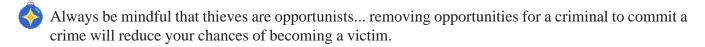
## Around the home Holiday Safety Tips

Sheriff Demings and the men and women of the Orange County Sheriff's Office want you to have a safe and happy holiday season. Historically robberies and burglaries tend to go up during the holidays. And almost always the predators who commit these seasonal crimes are "opportunists." Removing the opportunity for a thief may dramatically reduce your chances of becoming the victim of a crime. Since your home will likely be the focal point of holiday gatherings with friends and relatives we would like to remind you to make your home as safe as you possibly can for your visitors.



Most people display their Christmas trees in a window in the front of their homes. Almost always there will be a bounty of wrapped gifts under that tree. Whenever you leave your home for an extended period of time be sure to pull those drapes shut or close your blinds to remove those gifts from the view of thief. If you have a live tree closing those drapes will help it stay fresh longer.

While we are on the topic of Christmas trees and holiday decorations, be sure to check your inside and outside lights for any defects in the wiring or connections. Keep that live tree watered to keep it fresh. Do you have pets? Make sure those tree decorations are pet friendly and not toxic to your furry friends.

If you do not have children and plan on hosting guests with young kids during the holidays be sure your home is child safe. Pay particular attention to your swimming pool (use that child protection pool fence if you have one) and make sure access to your backyard oasis is locked down.

When you leave your home for an extended period of time make certain it is secure. The weather is great this time of year and many people like to leave their doors and windows open. Be sure to close and lock them before you leave your residence unattended. Ditto for vehicles parked in your driveway. Unlocked cars are almost always the first ones to be burglarized.

Does your home have a fireplace? We often have some nice cool nights during the holiday season that beg for a warm fire in the fireplace. Do a quick safety check to make sure the flue and chimney are in good condition and free from obstructions. Be sure to have a protective ember screen in place, and check to see that those ashes are completely extinguished before throwing them out.

Christmas almost always means new bikes, trikes, skateboards, and a myriad of toy vehicles will be out in full force in the days following Santa's visit. Many of the operators of these new acquisitions will be inexperienced. Make certain your kids understand the rules of the road and wear helmets whenever appropriate. Even more important... be on the lookout for these "inexperienced" riders and drivers when you are driving through your neighborhoods.

Have a safe and happy holiday season!