

From the Office of the Sheriff: "No break over the holidays"

'Tis the holiday season and while many take a break from work, law enforcement will be on duty, often responding to holiday related calls for service. I field frequent questions regarding the holiday season. Do you add more staffing for New Year's Eve? Does crime take a break over Christmas? The answer to both questions is no. Holidays do generate an increase in certain calls for service and some which are unique to the time of year. We also respond to calls which significantly increase the emotions due to the holiday season.

I'll start with New Year's Eve. Historically, we see no abnormal increase in bad behavior or drunken driving. House parties, designated drivers, and responsible serving have had a positive impact, reducing the number of impaired drivers on our roads. As with any other profession, this is also a night in which our employees want off as well so we manage at minimum staffing. With that being said, our minimum staffing has great capability to enforce traffic laws.

A frequent call we will deal with is child custody matters. The holidays should be focused upon making our children happy yet many divorced couples will throw their children directly into their personal quarrels and use them as leverage over the holidays. The child exchange will be late or not occur at all, one parent will have an excuse why they should not share the children over the holidays, or refuse to share because of the other's "poor behavior." This places us in a bad spot as we have very little information on the custody matters and will base our decisions upon the court documents even though the parents may have worked a side deal that one wants to renege upon.

Christmas Eve generates a few domestic related calls. Spouses await their significant other to come home from work with the holiday bonus check to pay bills and then attend the children's holiday program held at church or school. Instead the spouse returns home drunk, missed the program and the bonus check has been spent drinking and gambling generating the domestic altercation. Another stimulant for Christmas domestic altercations will be the gift you got your parents compared to what you got your in-laws or which holiday you spend with which side of the family. Lastly, don't forget about the burglars, they know beneath the tree is laden with valuables and many are away for the night so secure all those valuables and lock your doors.

Holidays are of course very special for so many of us. Deputies assigned to work try to find 20 minutes to stop home for those special moments with family. Traffic crashes and EMS calls generate a higher emotion and what seems to be a faster response during the holidays. Nobody wants to celebrate Christmas if it is also the anniversary of the loss of a loved one. The most difficult of calls may be the death notification to a family while a Christmas tree sparkles in the background.

For all of you who work 24/7/365 schedules - thank you! Your dedication and commitment to work holidays allows so many others to enjoy theirs. From our highway workers in case of snow to those who provide great care to our elderly and those in our local hospitals, it may be the second or third year in a row at work. So while you enjoy your Tom and Jerry, think about those who are unable to. Thanks for listening, [tnehls@co.dodge.wi.us](mailto:tnehls@co.dodge.wi.us) or @sheriffnehls on Twitter.