



MERRY CHRISTMAS

5 Tips to Help Your Law Enforcement Family Adjust to the Holidays

By Rachel Zemlock, Article [HERE](#)

We have made it to the holiday season – what’s your law enforcement spouse going to be missing? It’s extremely unlikely they will be making them all.

It’s one of the things that makes our first responder family life so unique. Last year my husband missed our son’s first year of trick or treating, but this year he has it off. He’s home for Thanksgiving but is working Christmas and New Year’s. I seriously can’t remember a New Year’s we have shared together in the past five years.

Unfortunately, the schedule doesn’t care about what is important to your family. And the schedule can’t let your first responder off early to make the tail end of your family’s celebration. The family is left adjusting to the schedule. Part of being a resilient police wife is being ready to adjust when we cannot control...and there’s a lot we cannot control especially when it comes to this season. Here are five tips on how to help your family adjust to the holiday schedule.

1. MODEL FLEXIBILITY FOR YOUR KIDS

We know that being flexible and having the ability to adapt to unexpected challenges can correlate to future success. I’d like you to know that our kids learn that from us! Even if you feel really disappointed in the fact that your spouse is missing Christmas this year, please hold back from expressing all those emotions in front of your children.

I don’t want you to ignore your feelings, please discuss them with your spouse behind closed doors and come up with a plan. However, in front of your kids, model some problem-solving. Talk through the scheduling conflict you’re having due to the traditions you have and ask for their input even!

Help them get excited about the change and special differences in their family. They look to us to try to figure out if we can handle this type of challenge or not. Please model for them that we can!

2. ADJUST YOUR IDEA AS TO WHAT “HOLIDAY” MEANS

We have three emergency responders in my immediate family and three in my husband’s immediate family. All of their schedules are staggered! You can imagine how flexible we all have to be if we want to get everyone together.

The calendar no longer dictates our holiday, it happens on the day and time we can all be together. Fortunately, emergency responder schedules are clear-cut. This means we can foresee whether our spouse will be working that day months in advance and can start discussing how it will be managed early enough. It's rare for my family that we all get together on the actual date the holiday lands on. Very often we will celebrate Christmas on the 23rd or another date that works for our schedules. However, there are rare occasions when we can all get together on the actual holiday, and this is an extra special time for us all.

3. MAKE FIRST RESPONDER FRIENDLY TRADITIONS

You can still attend those traditions your extended family members hold, with or without your first responder spouse. On top of that, your immediate family should make new traditions that complement your family's lifestyle.

You were likely able to hold those strong traditions you grew up with because you didn't grow up in a first responder family. Your kids have a different reality. They likely have many years of adjustment ahead. My recommendation would be to make new traditions within your immediate family that are more first responder friendly. This means they don't depend on a date and time, but on an experience. So that Christmas Eve gift opening might mean the last day your family has all together before Xmas. Maybe that's the 23rd because the first responder parent works the 24th and 25th. Sure your kids will have a special gift a day early but what kid wouldn't want that!?

Sometimes you may also have to get creative with how to make this work, such as writing a couple of letters to Santa explaining the situation and asking for a gift delivery to the station so Dad can be there for it or to deliver gifts a day early due to your family's circumstances. I've heard Santa can be very flexible for first responder families.

4. INCLUDE THE FIRST RESPONDER SPOUSE ANY WAY YOU CAN

There are also going to be holidays when we all just have to accept that our spouse will not be there, despite our best efforts. This happens when there are things you cannot reschedule (like trick or treating), my husband gets called into work last minute, or we just cannot arrange the holiday at another time. On these days we usually call or set up a video call so he can see the family and catch up at least for a moment. This allows everyone to say hi and allows him to feel that he at least made an appearance. I see it as my role to "represent" for us. I always show up and carry on as usual.

5. COMMUNICATE AND PLAN AHEAD

Communication about your expectations and your spouse's expectations is key. Talk about it early, before the extended family starts making plans. Just know that it's part of any first responder job and one of the more difficult aspects to get used to. With the right mindset, I promise, it is manageable. If you need more support around this I can help. This really makes you cherish the holidays when you don't have to worry about your spouse going to work. It feels like a huge win in those years when their schedule happens to allow them a couple of big holidays off.

Winter Conference Registration

Reminder: You can sign up for Sheriff's Winter Conference starting December 15th on ISA's website.

When: February 12th - 15th
Where: Embassy Suites, East Peoria

We look forward to seeing everyone!



Award Nominations

Thank you to every Sheriff who submitted award nominations for Deputy of the Year, Correctional Officer of the Year, and Telecommunicator of the Year!

Award winners have been chosen and will be announced on the evening of February 14th during an awards ceremony at the Winter Sheriff's Conference in East Peoria, IL.

Sheriff's Offices & Community Outreach

Sangamon County Sheriff Jack Campbell greeted Mr. and Mrs. Claus as they arrived in Springfield, IL for the 9-1-1 First Responders Toy Drive.

Sangamon County Sheriff's Office assisted in the event which benefits organizations such as: Toys for Tots, Brother James Court, Springfield Families Helping Families and more.



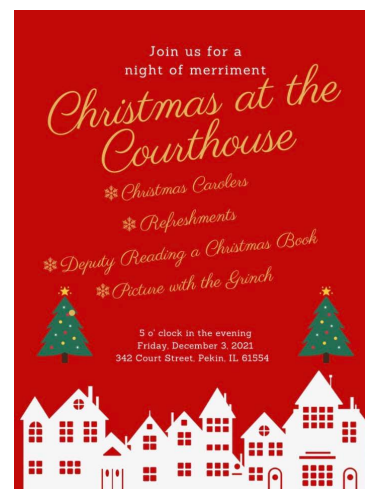
LaSalle County Sheriff's Office is serving their community by providing free hats and gloves for children in need this winter.

Items can be picked up anytime at LaSalle County Sheriff's Office.

Tazewell County Sheriff's Office is giving back to their community by hosting "Christmas at the Courthouse", a free event for the holidays!

This event will include:

- Christmas Carolers
- Refreshments
- Deputy Reading a Christmas Book
- Picture with the Grinch
- and more!



Cook County Sheriff's Office gave back to their community by delivering 325 turkeys to shelters, missions, and churches across the county.

"It was a joy being able to partner with organizations to help those who need it

most."



Adams County Sheriff's Office is giving back to their community by partnering with the Quincy Toys For Tots as a drop off location.

Toys will be distributed to local children.

"We appreciate the support and generosity of the people who donate toys. Every child deserves a Christmas!"



DuPage County gave back to their community by hosting "Shop with a Cop" at Ackerman Sports and Fitness Center in Glen Ellyn. A delicious breakfast was provided for children, basketball and volleyball games were held with participating officers and Santa made his grand appearance right before the parade!

Announcements:

Welcome MiChelle Scrimpsher to the ISA! MiChelle has a background working at IEMA in the Terrorism Task Force and in HR Administration at the Teachers' Retirement System. She will be answering our phones, assisting in filing Witness Slips, performing data entry, assisting with mailings and more. Please take a moment to send MiChelle a welcome email! michelle@ilsheriff.org

We are excited to welcome her to the team!

2022 Conference Dates:

Sheriff's Winter Training

February 12 - 15, 2022

Embassy Suites

East Peoria

Jail Medical Summit

August 25, 2022

Sheriff's Summer Training

September 18 - 20, 2022

Embassy Suites

East Peoria



Wishing you and yours
the very best of the
Holiday Season



2021 PREFERRED VENDOR PROGRAM



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Level: PLATINUM

would not be able to
host our Training
Conferences!



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