

LAUREL LIVING

The Official Newsletter for the City of Laurel



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A Message from Mayor Keith R. Sydnor

As we close out 2025, I am filled with a deep sense of gratitude—for our residents, our businesses, our community partners, and the many individuals who pour their time, talent, and passion into making Laurel a better place every single day. This year has brought meaningful progress across our city, from advancing key initiatives to strengthening the services that support our neighborhoods. None of it would be possible without the collective commitment and resilience of the people who call Laurel home.

I am pleased to welcome our newly sworn-in City Council. I extend my sincere congratulations to each member and look forward to working with them as we continue serving this community with transparency, accountability, and a shared vision for Laurel's future. Their leadership, paired with the trust residents place in us, sets the foundation for the important work ahead. As we move into 2026, we remain focused on elevating city services, enhancing public engagement, and highlighting the diversity and strength that define our city.

As we step into the new year, I encourage residents to mark your calendars for the City of Laurel's Annual Town Hall Meeting on Thursday, February 12, 2026, from 6:30 p.m. to 8:00 p.m. at the Joseph R. Robison Laurel Municipal Center, 8103 Sandy Spring Rd. This annual gathering provides a clear, comprehensive update on my administration's priorities and our progress.

Laurel is growing, evolving, and thriving because of you. Thank you for your engagement, your partnership, and your trust. Serving as your mayor continues to be one of the greatest honors of my life.

May this season bring peace, reflection, and joy to you and your families. I look forward to all that we will achieve together in 2026.



Proudly Serving You!



Council President
Bencris Smith
At-Large



Council President Pro Tempore
Adrian Simmons
Ward 1



Councilmember James Kole
Ward 1



Councilmember Kyla Clark
Ward 2



Councilmember Jeffrey Mills
Ward 2



Office of City Administrator
Christian L. Pulley, CPM
City Administrator
Ext. 2242



Office of the City Council
Sara Green, City Clerk
Ext. 2120



Budget and Personnel Services
Michele Saylor, Director
Ext. 2248



Communications
Natalie Williams, Director
Ext. 2208



Economic and Community Development
Jay Meashey Director
Ext. 2232



Emergency Management
Christina Cornwell, Director
Ext. 2232



Fire Marshal and
Permit Services
Danny Selby, Director
Ext. 2195



Information Technology
James Cornwell-Shiel, Director
Ext. 2240



Human Services
Marchelle LeBlanc, Director
Ext. 2723



Parks and Recreation
Bill Bailey, Director
Ext. 2233



Police Department
Russell Hamill, Chief
(301) 498-0092



Public Works
Tim Miller, Director
Ext. 3205

Newly Elected Councilmembers Sworn In City Council Welcomes New At-Large Member After Recount



On November 24th, during the Mayor and City Council Meeting, the newly elected City Council took the oath of office, officially beginning a new legislative term for the City of Laurel.

In the At-Large race, former Council President Brencis Smith secured his return to the Council after defeating incumbent Christine Johnson by a narrow margin of 641 to 621. The 20-vote difference triggered a charter-mandated recount, which later confirmed Smith's victory. Voters re-elected all other incumbents in Wards 1 and 2. In Ward 1, Adrian G. Simmons, who first joined the Council in 2024 through a special election, retained his seat with 547 votes. Councilmember James Kole earned 475 votes to begin his third term. In Ward 2, both Mills and Council President Kyla Clark ran unopposed, receiving 452 and 493 votes respectively. Seventeen write-in votes were also cast in this race.

Following the swearing-in, the newly seated Council voted to elect Brencis Smith as Council President and Adrian G. Simmons as Council President Pro Tempore.

The City extends heartfelt appreciation to the Laurel Board of Elections, our dedicated election judges, and every resident who took part in this year's municipal election. Your commitment to civic participation strengthens our community and ensures every voice is heard.



Click here to watch the First Mayor and City Council Meeting featuring the newly seated Council on our YouTube channel, @LaurelTVOfficial, under the November/December 2025 Newsletter Videos playlist.

Closing the Year with Appreciation and Thanks A Heartfelt Message from Councilwoman Kyla Clark, Ward 2



*"As we approach the end of 2025 and my term as Council President, I'm filled with gratitude for the opportunity to serve Ward 2 and our entire Laurel community in this leadership role. This year has been one of meaningful progress—from launching our city's first Multicultural Advisory Committee to advancing critical housing and sustainability initiatives that will shape Laurel's future. **While my time as Council President has come to a close, my commitment to transparent, collaborative governance and to listening to your voices remains as strong as ever.** Heartfelt thanks to my fellow councilmembers for their dedication to our residents. Special recognition to Councilmember Christine Johnson, At-Large, for her service from 2023-2025, and Councilmember Jeffrey Mills for his leadership as City Council Pro Tempore during 2024-2025. Your commitment to Laurel has made a difference. Thank You! Happy Holidays!" ~Councilwoman Kyla Clark*

Email: kclark@laurel.md.us

Building Stronger Residents

Mayor and City Council Recognizes Laurel Citizens University Graduates



The newest graduates of the Laurel Citizens University were celebrated during the Mayor and City Council Meeting. This recognition marks the completion of their multi-week journey learning how Laurel's government operates—from public safety and community partnerships to city services and day-to-day operations.

The program offers residents a unique opportunity to engage directly with city leadership and deepen their understanding of how decisions are made on behalf of the community.

To learn more about the Laurel Citizens University or future enrollment opportunities, visit cityoflaurel.org.

New Addition to the Mayor's Office

Meet Crystal Hypolite, Chief of Staff to Mayor Keith Sydnor



Crystal Hypolite holds the position of Chief of Staff to Laurel Mayor Keith Sydnor, where she oversees intergovernmental affairs and acts as the primary advisor. With a strong background in both the public and private sectors, Crystal brings a wealth of experience to her role. She is passionate about empowering individuals and communities to effectively use their political voices, believing this is the key to driving meaningful change.

Previously, she served as a Senior Advisor with the Housing Authority of Baltimore City, where she excelled in developing and analyzing housing policies that enhance access for underserved populations. As the Legislative Director of the Prince George's County House Delegation, she skillfully mobilizes elected officials, businesses, community leaders, and a diverse array of advocates to strengthen and improve opportunities for county residents

to strengthen and improve opportunities for county residents. Earlier in her career, Crystal made her mark on Capitol Hill. Crystal has a proven track record of uniting residents from various neighborhoods and communities by forging strategic partnerships, providing access to vital information and resources, and actively listening to constituent concerns.

She is a proud graduate of Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey and a dedicated Sister of Delta Beta Psi Sorority, Inc. Additionally, she takes great pride in being a parent and her Afro-Caribbean culture.

Leading with Quiet Confidence

A Conversation with Christian Pulley, Laurel's First African American City Administrator



Christian Pulley, City Administrator for the City of Laurel, often recognized for her steady and intentional leadership style, recently shared insight into the values that guide her work and her commitment to serving the Laurel community.

In this new video, "**How'd Her Career Get There?**" she talks about leading with purpose, staying focused amid challenges, and allowing results to speak for themselves.

WATCH NOW

Watch the full interview on our YouTube channel, @LaurelTVOfficial, under the November/December 2025 Newsletter Videos playlist.

New Talent. New Possibilities.

A Warm Welcome to Our New Economic and Community Development Colleagues



Jay Meashey, Director Department of Economic and Community Development

Jay Meashey is a longtime believer in community development and the ability of government to do good in people's lives. Born and raised in Central Pennsylvania, he first engaged in public service on a volunteer basis. He joined a citizens' advisory board while at the same time serving small businesses and startups in various roles, including marketing, inventory control, and management. He pivoted into public administration after nearly 20 years in the private sector, earning a bachelor's degree from Salisbury University of Maryland.

Meashey is deeply invested in the tenets of smart growth, believing that city planners are the doctors of the community - responsible for identifying negative outcomes when they've occurred and working with stakeholders to fix bad situations and prevent future harms. An enthusiastic economic developer, he is equally prepared to help solo entrepreneurs and major multinational corporations looking to do business in Maryland communities and hire residents. He is especially a believer in professional development, and he is active in both the Maryland Economic Development Association and the International Economic Development Council.

In his free time, Meashey enjoys doing crossword puzzles, watching movies in the theater, going to concerts, and discussing any and everything about Christmas! He is enthusiastic to do all of these things with the folks who live, work, and play in Laurel.



Naomi Herr, Economic Development Coordinator

Born and raised in Prince George's County, Maryland, Naomi is a proud Bowie State alumna with a Bachelor of Science in Communications and a master's degree in Community and Economic Development from Penn State University.

Throughout her career, she has focused on making a sustainable impact on the communities around her, driven by a passion for closing gaps in equitable resources and expanding opportunities for marginalized communities in the places she has had the privilege to serve. After spending the last decade in New Orleans driving economic development in partnership with the City, she is excited to bring that experience back home as she begins a new chapter serving the City of Laurel.

Upcoming December Meetings



December 4 @ 6pm (In-Person)
Master Plan Review Committee



December 9 @ 6pm (Virtual)
Planning Commission



December 16 @ 6pm (Virtual)
Historic District Commission



December 18 @ 6pm (Virtual)
Board of Appeals

Small
BUSINESS
Saturday



Farmer's Market

378 Main Street, Laurel, Maryland

Saturday, November 29, 2025

9:00am-12noon

The Sky's the Limit

Laurel's Youth Drone Pilots Gear Up for December Certification Exams

Up, up, and away! This fall, the City of Laurel's inaugural Youth Drone Certificate Program—launched by Mayor Keith R. Sydnor in partnership with Alpha Drones USA—has entered its final stretch. After 10 weeks of intensive flight training, safety and regulation instruction, and hands-on drone practice, the program's three student participants are now preparing to sit for their Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) Level 1 Drone Certification exams in early December. Mayor Sydnor selected three students aged 16–18 to participate in the program: Nelson Paulo, Robyn Wood, and Yusra Ali.



Nelson Paulo is a junior at Chesapeake Math & IT (CMIT) Academy North High School. He is interested in learning more about aviation, drones, and technology to prepare for future career opportunities in sports journalism. Paulo attended the Washington Association of Black Journalists' (WABJ) Urban Journalism Workshop at American University, learning skills in reporting and communications. "I'm really looking forward to learning how to use bigger drones and how to capture images from different angles," said Paulo. "I'm excited to apply these skills in the sports journalism field." Earning a drone certification license will help him expand these skills. Paulo volunteers at First Baptist Church, helping with refereeing and coaching Upwards Games. He attends youth groups and is serving as manager on the CMIT soccer team and a sprinter on CMIT's track team.

Robyn Wood is a junior at Eleanor Roosevelt High School. Wood was accepted into the science and technology program at her high school. She is interested in the hands-on experience where students can gain experience working with drones. "I'm excited to learn about the different functions of drones and how they can help make the world a safer place," said Wood. "I'm interested in becoming a drone pilot or using these skills in a career that involves math or engineering." She enjoys playing basketball in her free time.

Yusra Ali is a senior at CMIT. She has a passion for photography, technology, and learning. Ali wants to gain a more comprehensive understanding of drone operation and safety regulation. She already owns a drone and wants to learn how to use it professionally and apply the skills she learns to real-world scenarios. "I want to learn how to use a drone and apply those skills in future careers, especially in real estate photography and surveying," said Ali. She enjoys spending her free time reading and volunteering at local schools and her mosque.

"I'm so excited about this program," said Mayor Sydnor. "I wanted to give our youth an opportunity to gain entry-level skills so that as they advance in their careers, they're already qualified. The goal is for the City of Laurel to be successful with this program and to encourage other municipalities in Maryland to adopt it, helping strengthen the future job market, create more technology jobs, and make our state better overall."





Laurel Living Shines Statewide

City of Laurel's Communications Department Earns Maryland Municipal League's Award for Innovative E-Newsletter

The City of Laurel is proud to announce that Laurel Living, our monthly citywide newsletter, has been honored by the Maryland Municipal League (MML) with the 2025 Achievement Award in the category of E-Government. This recognition celebrates municipalities that demonstrate excellence in communication, transparency, and community engagement.



Laurel Living has become a trusted resource for residents across the city. Each issue brings together key updates—Mayor and City Council initiatives, department highlights, project milestones, staff recognitions, meeting notices, and community events—into one concise, easy-to-read publication. Available both online and in print at locations throughout Laurel, the newsletter ensures residents can stay connected in the way that works best for them.

Natalie Williams, Director of the Department of Communications, said the award reflects Laurel's commitment to meeting residents where they are. "This recognition affirms the value of clear, consistent, and accessible communication," Williams said. "Laurel Living is designed to make it easier for residents to stay informed, engaged, and connected to their local government. We are proud to deliver a resource that keeps our community at the center of everything we do."

The City of Laurel extends its gratitude to the Maryland Municipal League for this honor—and to the residents who read, share, and rely on Laurel Living each month.

A Real Community Hero

Simone McCumber, LVFD Firefighter of the Year



The Laurel Volunteer Fire Department (LVFD) held its Annual Awards Banquet where Simone McCumber was honored as Firefighter of the Year. Selected by her peers, McCumber was recognized for her exceptional dedication, top-tier service hours, and unwavering commitment to the department's motto, "Service for Others."

"I was truly surprised because it was my peers and my family who voted for me," McCumber said. "I love this job, and I love Laurel. I just want to give back to the community that has given so much to me. Every night on the ambulance is an honor."

McCumber's service reflects the spirit of volunteerism that defines the LVFD. Her passion, work ethic, and devotion to the Laurel community continue to inspire fellow members and strengthen the department's mission.



Lived Experience. Lasting Impact.

A Conversation with Donald Whitehead, Jr., Laurel's Homelessness Task Force Chair

As temperatures begin to fall, the need for safe, warm shelter rises across Maryland. Each winter, more individuals and families seek refuge from the cold—and this year is no exception.

At the Laurel Multiservice Center (LMSC), the impact of winter is already being felt. During its first winter in operation, the number of unhoused individuals seeking services at the center doubled. In response to the growing need, LMSC's winter shelters are set to open by mid-December.

To raise awareness and foster community dialogue, the Multiservice Center recently hosted their inaugural Homelessness Awareness Panel. The event featured powerful stories from individuals who have experienced homelessness firsthand, offering insight into the challenges they faced and the resilience they've shown.

Among the speakers was Donald Whitehead, Jr., chair of the City's Homelessness Task Force and executive director of the National Coalition for the Homeless. Drawing from his own lived experience with homelessness, Whitehead emphasized the urgent need for expanded shelter services during the colder months and throughout the year.

Click here to watch Whitehead's powerful story of experiencing homelessness on our YouTube channel, @LaurelTVOfficial, under the November/December 2025 Newsletter Videos playlist.

 **WATCH NOW**



WREATHS ACROSS *America*

DECEMBER 13, 2025 | 11AM

JOSEPH R. ROBISON MUNICIPAL CENTER
8103 SANDY SPRING ROAD

Live on Laurel TV
Comcast 71 or 996, Verizon 12, or LaurelTV.org



Serving Up Honor

Mayor Keith R. Sydnor Hosts 2nd Annual Veterans Day Breakfast in Laurel

The City of Laurel proudly hosted its Second Annual Veterans Day Breakfast on Saturday, November 8, 2025, bringing together service members, community leaders, and residents to honor those who have bravely served our nation.

This year's event featured keynote remarks from Maryland Attorney General Anthony G. Brown, USA (Ret.), who reflected on the meaning of service, sacrifice, and unity - reminding attendees that honoring veterans is not only a national tradition but also a local responsibility.

A highlight of the morning was a heartfelt presentation by Mayor Keith R. Sydnor, USN (Ret.), who bestowed the Key to the City upon Master Sergeant Elizabeth Helm-Frazier, USA (Ret.), recognizing her service and dedication to preserving the legacy of African American women in the military.

The program also celebrated veterans across generations, with awards presented to local honorees for their continued impact within the Laurel community.

As cities and towns across the country paused to pay tribute to America's heroes, Laurel took special pride in honoring the veterans who live, work, and serve right in its own backyard—men and women whose courage continues to strengthen the city's foundation of service and gratitude.



Watch the spotlight of our Veterans Day Breakfast Ceremony on our YouTube channel, [@LaurelTVOfficial](#), under the November/December 2025 Newsletter Videos playlist.

Thank You For Your Participation Laurel's 2025 Turkey Trot — In Photos



Revving Up For Safety New Camera Initiative Targets High Risk Areas with Steeper Fines

State officials are cracking down on drivers with a need for speed. On October 1, 2025, Maryland introduced two new speed enforcement laws to combat dangerous driving and reduce traffic fatalities. The laws are a cornerstone of the Vision Zero initiative, aimed at eliminating serious injuries and deaths on Maryland roads.

WHAT'S CHANGING?

Graduated Speed Camera Fines

Drivers caught by automated cameras going 16 mph or more over the speed limit will face increased fines as high as \$425, replacing the previous flat rate of \$40. The new tiered system is designed to penalize excessive speeders more severely.

Cameras on High-Crash Roads

The City of Laurel can now install speed cameras on roads with the highest crash rates, not just in school or residential zones. Revenue beyond operational costs must be reinvested in road safety improvements on those same roads.

Maryland is stepping up enforcement to make roads safer for all. According to statewide data:

- 94 speeding-related deaths occurred annually between 2019 and 2023.
- More than 3,600 injuries per year were tied to speeding.
- Fatal crashes decreased by 6.3% in 2024, signaling that enforcement efforts may be working.



SCHOOL ZONES AUTHORIZED FOR SPEED CAMERAS

(School Zone Cameras operate Monday-Friday, 6:00am – 8:00pm)

- 100 Block of Seventh St S/B
- 7500 Block of Van Dusen Road S/B
- 7700 Block of Van Dusen Road N/B
- 7600 Block of Brooklyn Bridge Road W/B
- 8000 Block of Cherry Lane E/B
- 8000 Block of Cherry Lane W/B
- 8000 Block of Sandy Spring Road E/B

RESIDENTIAL AREAS AUTHORIZED FOR SPEED CAMERAS

(Cameras operate 7 days a week, 24 hours a day)

- 800 Block of Gorman Ave. E/B
- 800 Block of Talbott Ave. W/B
- 30 Block of Washington Blvd. S/B

Connecting The Community

8th St. Improvements Enhance Safety and Accessibility



The City of Laurel is undertaking the essential Eight Street Improvement Project to enhance infrastructure, safety, and accessibility for residents and commuters. This project involves comprehensive repairs and upgrades to improve the longevity and quality of the roadway and pedestrian facilities.

Key benefits include improved safety with new pedestrian ramps, raised crosswalks, and new rapid rectangular flashing beacon pedestrian crossing signals to enhance safety of walkers and cyclists; repair and replacement of damaged concrete and asphalt to extend the lifespan of the street; and enhanced accessibility by upgrading sidewalks and ramps to improve the compliance with ADA standards. The repairs started on October 13th, and the completion date is projected to be Monday, December 1, 2025.

"Pedestrian safety was our top priority when designing the improvements for 8th Street," said Timothy Miller, Director of Public Works. "These enhancements include Rectangular Rapid Flashing Beacons and signage at Park Avenue, as well as at the entrances and exits of Emancipation Park, both featuring raised crosswalks to ensure safer crossings for everyone."

Construction starts at Montgomery Street and runs until Eighth Street dead-ends but will avoid the area around Talbot Avenue. Those driving through the construction can expect temporary lane closures and traffic delays. Flaggers will be present to safely guide drivers through the work zone.

Pedestrian access will be maintained around construction zones, though temporary sidewalk detours may be necessary. Residents and commuters that utilize street parking will need to adhere to temporary 'no parking' signs. These will be posted at least 72 hours in advance in areas where work is underway. Vehicles parked in these zones will be subject to citation and towed at the owner's expense. Intermittent, temporary closures of individual driveways will be required during curb, gutter, and sidewalk replacement.

Trash, recycling, compost collection, and emergency access will be maintained during construction.

For questions, comments, or to report issues related to this project, please contact the Assistant Director of the City of Laurel Department of Public Works, Thomas Helms, at (301) 725-0088 ext. 3205 or thelms@laurel.md.us.



A Night of Harmony

All-County Honor Concert Showcases Student Talent and Heart Led By Laurel High School Choir Director, Kevin Lewis.



In a powerful celebration of musical excellence and student achievement, talented singers from elementary, middle, and high schools across Prince George's County came together on Tuesday, November 18, for the highly anticipated All-County Honor Concert.

The evening was filled with moving performances, but one of the most memorable moments came when Laurel High School's choir director, Kevin Lewis, took the podium to conduct a chorus of students from 11 different schools—including 27 students from Laurel High. His leadership and passion left a lasting impression on both the audience and his students.

"Not only does he encourage and sort of nurture talent—and it comes out in the concerts—he is like a father to the kids," said Melissa Holland, a member of the Laurel Arts Council. "The affection they have for him... it shines through in every concert."

For Rebekah Castleman, a student at Northwestern High School and featured soloist, the experience was about more than just music.

"It's just so beautiful singing with people who are just as passionate as you," she said. "I've never had such a fun, serious, and caring director who truly takes his craft seriously and loves his students. Singing with all my peers—it was such a wonderful experience."

For Lewis, the concert was a full-circle moment. Returning to his alma mater, he reflected on how the school helped shape his love of music—and how he now shares that love with the next generation.

"I can't make beautiful music unless I have hardworking, talented musicians," Lewis said. "I'm grateful for all the schools whose teachers saw them fit to loan them to me for a little bit. These students were truly special, and they worked hard so that we could make this moment happen."

His students agree. Kevin Rodriguez, a Laurel High School student, summed it up simply: "What a wonderful man. Influential. Made me love music to the max. Makes me want to take it to the next level."

Holland echoed that sentiment, noting the deeper impact of the evening: "We're in a time of... sort of crisis in the nation, and these kids gave us hope. Their voices were filled with hope. And that, to me, was thrilling. That's what got the standing ovation."



Watch the Prince George's County All-County Honors Chorus Concert on our YouTube channel, [@LaurelTVOfficial](#), under the November/December 2025 Newsletter Videos playlist.



Celebrating Chandler Robbins A New Mural Honors a Bird Science Pioneer

Local group Laurel for the Patuxent recently unveiled a stunning new mural dedicated to the renowned ornithologist Chandler Robbins. The mural, measuring 45 by 15 feet, is a collaborative effort involving business owner Nadol Hishmeh, Friends of Patuxent, and Laurel for the Patuxent.

Located on the once-blank wall of the Quick Stop at the corner of Fifth and Main Street, this vibrant artwork is a tribute to Robbins' significant contributions to bird conservation both in the United States and globally.

Chandler Robbins, born in 1918 in Massachusetts, was a pivotal figure in the field of ornithology. After graduating from Harvard, he joined what is now the Patuxent Wildlife Research Center. He played a crucial role in discovering the harmful effects of pesticide DDT on bird populations, a finding that had far-reaching implications for environmental conservation.

Robbins' career spanned over 70 years, during which he made numerous groundbreaking contributions to ornithology. He founded the North American Breeding Bird Survey in 1966, providing critical data on bird population declines and inspiring international conservation efforts. Robbins also co-authored the influential "Birds of North America: A Guide to Field Identification," which has sold over five million copies and introduced countless individuals to birdwatching.

The idea for the mural came from Laurel for the Patuxent member Ruth Walls, inspired after passing Robbins' house in Laurel. She suggested creating something to honor Robbins. After eight years of planning, fundraising, and finding the right artist and location, the mural finally came to life.

Local artist Jeff Huntington was chosen to bring this vision to reality. Huntington drew inspiration from Robbins' well-worn binoculars, which Robbins famously refused to replace, saying, "there are too many birds in these ones." This story inspired Huntington to incorporate overlapping circles in the mural, symbolizing a Venn diagram, to represent the interconnectedness of Robbins' work and the natural world.

Cheryl Dyer, a member of Laurel for the Patuxent, expressed her excitement about the mural, stating, "It's exhilarating. It's amazing. It's magnificent. There really aren't words to describe what this mural means to us, and particularly to Laurel for the Patuxent."



Click below to watch the process of the mural being created on our YouTube channel, [@LaurelTVOfficial](#), under the November/December 2025 Newsletter Videos playlist.

Preparing for the Holiday Season

A Gift Giving Guide to Preparedness

The holiday season is a time for travel, celebrations with family and friends, and gift giving. While preparing for the holidays may be fun, preparing for an emergency can be overwhelming and difficult. Many people spend a lot of time and money on shiny "must have" gadgets for their emergency kits only to realize that the items do not fit in their kit or they do not know how to use/maintain it. Other items that promise to "make survival easier" are not cost effective many people. This holiday season, before you pull out your wallet to buy that "must have" gadget or bag of emergency supplies, give your friends and family a useful gift of preparedness with these suggestions from the City of Laurel Department of Emergency Management.



Start with the basics. It is important to understand the various type of risks and hazards you, your family, and community face, as well as, the level of vulnerability. By determining this, it is easier to determine what is need most during and immediately after an emergency. A well-stocked emergency kit is a thoughtful, valuable gift that can help someone stay safe and comfortable until help arrives. Basic emergency kits should include enough food, water, and other supplies to last for at least 3 days or 72 hours. Refer to the following twelve (12) basics of preparedness as a starting point to build your kit.



Once the basics have been covered, focus on gifting preparedness items that support your loved ones' unique needs and abilities. Younger children, persons with disabilities, teenagers, adults, and the elderly all have different, specific needs. Before buying a survival or preparedness tool, ask it is really practical, it is needed, and is it reliable? Do some online research before purchasing items to verify their quality, functionality, and reliability.

Finally, increase the value of the gift by taking time to show your loved one how to use it and how it fits into their emergency kit/plan. Spend time allowing them to practice using it. Giving the gift of preparedness is not only practical but also shows that you care about the safety and well-being of your loved ones. By choosing thoughtful gifts that help them be ready for any situation, you can provide peace of mind and make a lasting impact. This holiday season, consider giving gifts that could protect and save you, your family members, and neighbors: the gift of preparedness.

PRACTICAL, USEFUL, AND UNIQUE PREPAREDNESS GIFTS

Gadgets for Safety

- Portable, Solar-Powered Cell Phone Chargers
- Fire Starter Kit
- Portable Water Filter Straws
- Headlamps
- Compass
- Personal Location Beacon

Preparedness Courses and Workshops

- CPR / AED / First Aid Classes
- Outdoor Survival Programs
- Food Preservations and Gardening Workshops

Home Safety Upgrade

- Smoke and Carbon Monoxide Detectors
- Fire Extinguishers Personalized Preparedness Plans:
- Customized Emergency Plans
- Waterproof Document Organizers

Books and Resources

- Preparedness and Survival Books
- Emergency Guides

Community Involvement Gifts

- Donations
- Volunteer Opportunities



Preparing for the Holiday Season

Prime Time for Scams: Holiday Shopping Online Safety

According to the Federal Bureau of Investigations, nearly 12,000 people fall victim to holiday shopping scams each year. These scams result in over \$73 million in total losses. By using malware or fraudulent websites, criminals attempt to steal money and identities by creating fake charities and deals that are “to good to be true.” This holiday season become a “cybersmart” holiday shopper with these cybersecurity strategies from the City of Laurel Department of Emergency Management.

Protect Your Devices and Accounts Against Scammers

Software updates, strong passwords, and multifactor authentication (MFA) protect you and your devices from known threats and scammers. Keeping software up to date is easier when you enable automatic software updates. Strong passwords are typically 16 characters long and unique for each account, especially financial and email accounts. A password manager can generate, save, and fill in strong passwords for you. Multifactor authentication (MFA) bolsters your cybersecurity by requiring a second way to prove your identity. This is safer than using a password alone.

Recognize Phishing Attempts

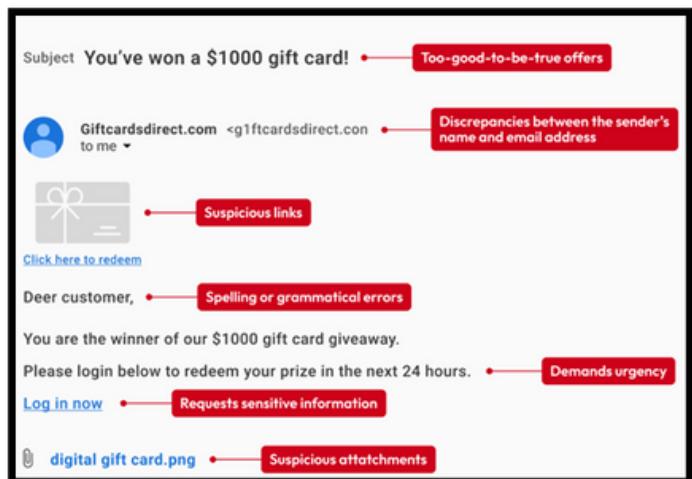
Phishing messages are sent more frequently during the holiday shopping season. They are designed to look like they are from trusted retailers but contain malicious links. If you are unsure whether or not a message is legitimate, use a search engine to look up the company website and contact information. Be cautious of requests for information; real businesses will not ask you for sensitive information via text or email. If you suspect an email might be a phishing scam, report it and then delete the email.

Purchase With Confidence

Before providing personal or financial information to make an online purchase, it is best to verify a business' authenticity. The Better Business Bureau allows you to search if a business is accredited, research reviews, and view complaints. If you decide to proceed with your purchase, ensure your information is encrypted as it is transmitted to the merchant's server. Verify that the website address begins with “https” instead of just “http” and that the padlock icon is locked. It is also recommended to use a credit card rather than a debit card, as laws limit your liability for fraudulent credit card charges. Finally, monitor your accounts frequently and report any unauthorized charges to your financial institution.

For more information about shopping safely online this holiday season, please visit the Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency at <https://www.cisa.gov/shop-safely-holiday-season>.

How Long Would It Take To Crack Your Password?				
# of Characters	Lowercase Letters Only	At Least 1 Uppercase Letter	At Least 1 Uppercase Letter + Number	At Least 1 Uppercase Letter + Number + Symbol
1	Instantly	Instantly	—	—
2	Instantly	Instantly	Instantly	—
3	Instantly	Instantly	Instantly	Instantly
4	Instantly	Instantly	Instantly	Instantly
5	Instantly	Instantly	Instantly	Instantly
6	Instantly	Instantly	Instantly	Instantly
7	Instantly	Instantly	1 Minute	6 Minutes
8	Instantly	22 Minutes	1 Hour	8 Hours
9	2 Minutes	19 Hours	3 Days	3 Weeks
10	1 Hour	1 Month	7 Months	5 Years
11	1 Day	5 Years	41 Years	400 Years
12	3 Weeks	300 Years	2,000 Years	34,000 Years





ARMORY

Illumination

Join us for an evening of holiday cheer as we light up the Armory and kick off the season with the annual parade and illumination celebration!

Date:

Saturday,
December 6, 2025

Location:

Laurel Armory,
422 Montgomery Street,
Laurel, MD 20707

Time:

Parade begins
at 3:45 p.m.

Illumination at
approximately
5:15 p.m.