

# MSU-ES Dawg Tracks



October 2009

Safety on Halloween



The Center for Disease Control and Prevention did a study from 1975 through 1996. The results revealed that deaths among young pedestrians were four times higher on Halloween evening than with the same time at any other time of the year. A good example of this is, as we know, children spend a vast amount of time outdoors during the daylight hours. Obviously, Halloween activities occur at night. Children who are “trick or treating” will cross streets in the middle of the block instead of at the corners or crosswalks, putting them at risk for a pedestrian injury. Children, without thinking, will take the shortest route to another location, which is usually between parked cars. At their age, very few have the judgment to think about watching for traffic threats or anticipating driver behavior.

The Center for Disease Control and Prevention, the American Academy of Pediatrics and the National Safety Council, collectively, have composed a set of tips to help keep children from getting injured on Halloween. I want to reprint these.

## **Children Should:**

- Go only to well-lit houses and remain on porches rather than entering the house. Carry a light with them.
- Travel in small groups that are always accompanied by an adult.
- Know their home numbers and carry coins in their pocket for emergency phone use.
- Have their names and addresses attached to their costumes.
- Bring treats home so that parents can inspect them before eating.
- Use costume swords and knives made from flexible material and not the rigid or sharp materials.
- Be cautious of animals and strangers.

## **When walking in neighborhoods, they should:**

- Use flashlights, stay on sidewalks and avoid crossing yards
- Cross streets at the corner, use crosswalks (if they are present) and do not cross between parked cars.
- Stop at all corners and stay in a group before crossing.
- Wear bright, reflective and flame retardant clothing.
- Consider using face paint instead of masks (face paint won't obstruct the vision like masks can).
- Avoid hats that might slide over the eyes.
- Avoid wearing loose, long and baggy costumes or oversized shoes (to prevent tripping).
- Be reminded to always look to the left, right and left again before crossing a street.

## **Parents and adults should:**

- Supervise the outing for children less than 12 years old.
- Establish a curfew time for older children to return.
- Prepare homes for the trick or treaters by cleaning the porches, lawns and sidewalks and placing the jack-o-lanterns way from doors and landings.
- Avoid giving choking hazards such as gums, peanuts, hard candies or small toys for treats to young children.
- Inspect all candy for safety before allowing the children to eat it.
- Parents and adults should ensure the safety of pedestrian trick- or-treaters.
- Make sure that children under the age of 10 years old are supervised when crossing streets.
- Drive slowly.
- Watch for children in the street and on medians.
- Exit driveways and alleyways carefully.
- Have children exit cars on the curb side and not on the traffic side.

## **About pumpkins:**

- Carve pumpkins on stable, flat surfaces with good lighting.
- Place lighted pumpkins away from curtains and other flammable objects, and do not leave lighted pumpkins unattended.
- Have children draw a face on the outside of the pumpkin, then the parents can do the actual cutting and carving.

## **Expecting treat –or- treaters or party guests?**

- Consider healthier treats for trick-or-treaters, such as individual packs of raisins, trail mix, and/or pretzels.
- For Halloween party guests, consider fruits, vegetables and/or cheeses.
- Use party games and trick-or-treat time as an opportunity for kids to get their daily dose of 60 minutes of physical activity.
- Be sure that stairs and walking areas are well-lit and free of obstacles that could cause falls.
- Remind drivers to watch out for trick-or-treaters and to drive safely.

