

MSU-ES Dawg Tracks



October, 2010

Halloween Safety



Halloween is an exciting time of the year for children. The National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) reported that from 2002 through 2005, there were 1,150 reported home structure fires resulting from Halloween decorations.

These fires resulted in 3 deaths, 56 injuries and \$24.8 million dollars in property damage. The Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) conducted a study from 1975 through 1996. This study showed that there are four times more deaths among pedestrians on Halloween evening than at any other time of the year. With these facts in mind, it behooves us to take all means possible to preserve the safety of all children during this Halloween season.

Following are some tips from the Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) and the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) that will help in keeping all Halloween "trick or treaters" safer during this Halloween period:

COSTUME SAFETY –

- **Purchase only flame resistant costumes** – Look for the label that identifies the fabric as flame resistant. This doesn't necessarily mean that the fabric won't burn, but will resist the flame and can be extinguished quickly.
- **Costume Fit** – The costume should be short enough to prevent children from tripping or getting tangled in the fabric. It should also not have blousing sleeves or a full body of fabric that could come in contact with a flame. Children should wear shoes that are sturdy and comfortable (little girls shouldn't wear Momma's high heels).
- **Increase Visibility** – Consider applying reflective tape to the costumes and "trick or treat" bags to increase visibility. It is also a good practice to furnish a flashlight to both the student and the adult chaperone.
- **Swords, sticks or canes** – If one of these items is a part of the child's costume, make sure that it isn't too sharp or long, as they might fall or trip and get hurt.
- **Masks** – Consider using makeup instead of a mask. The mask could get displaced and obstruct their vision.

PEDESTRIAN SAFETY –

- Young children should always be accompanied by an adult.
- The children should walk from house to house (no running) and stay on the sidewalks.
- Always caution children to not run out between parked cars, across lawns and yards where furniture, ornaments or clotheslines could present dangers.

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Excerpts: American Academy of Pediatrics
www.cpsc.gov 8/31/2010

CHOOSING SAFE HOUSES –

- Go only to homes where the occupants are friendly and acquainted with your family.
- Children should never enter apartments or houses unless they are accompanied by an adult.
- Home occupants should remove obstacles from lawns, porches or steps that might cause a trip or fall.
- Candlelit jack-o-lanterns should be kept away from landings or doorsteps, where they might cause a fire.

MOTORISTS SAFETY –

- Watch for children darting out from parked cars and walking on curbs, medians and roadways.
- Enter and exit driveways very carefully.
- At dusk, watch for children in dark clothing.

PARENT SAFETY CHECKS –

- Make sure that an adult or older responsible youth supervises children under 12 years old.
- Discuss the route the "treaters" will be taking and know the names of the other kids that will be in the group. That way you will know the area where they are and who they are with.
- Teach your children to only stop at familiar houses and leave the strange ones alone. Give them a curfew or time to be at home.
- Pin a slip of paper on the child's shirt with name, phone number, etc. so that if they do get lost someone can help them out.
- Make sure that they don't try to eat some of the candy before they return home and the parents have chance to inspect it.

TREATS –

To endure a safe "trick or treating" outing:

- Give the kids an early meal before they go out.
- Insist that they bring their treats home for your inspection before starting to eat them.
- Wash fruit and slice in small pieces.
- When in doubt, throw it out.

I believe, or better still, I know if these tips are used, the "trick or treat" night will be safer and more enjoyable for everyone.

The "trick" to a good Halloween is to make sure everyone is safe. The Halloween dangers are not derived from the witches and spirits, but from falls and pedestrian car crashes.

ACCIDENTS HURT!!
SAFETY DOESN'T