

# Halloween 2009



As the temperature drops, the leaves fall, and the pumpkins ripen, thoughts turn to trick-or-treating, carved pumpkins and costumes. The New York State Consumer Protection Board urges parents and caregivers to follow some simple rules to help keep our children safe this Halloween.

## Safe Trick-or-Treating

### Costumes

- Look for flame-resistant fabrics such as nylon or polyester, or look for the label “Flame Resistant” when purchasing costumes, masks, beards and wigs. Flame-resistant fabrics will resist burning and should extinguish quickly. To minimize the risk of contact with candles and other fire sources, avoid costumes made of flimsy materials and outfits with big, baggy sleeves or billowing skirts.
- Purchase or make costumes that are light, bright and clearly visible to motorists.
- Decorate or trim costumes with reflective tape that will glow in the beam of a car’s headlights. Bags or sacks should be light colored or decorated with reflective tape for greater visibility during dust or darkness. Reflective tape is usually available in hardware, bicycle and sporting goods stores, and in the sporting goods section of most discount retailers.
- Give children flashlights to see and be seen.
- Make sure that costumes fit well and not drag on the ground to guard against trips and falls.
- Have children wear well-fitting, sturdy shoes. Oversized shoes and excessive high heels can be dangerous for children, especially at night.
- Tie hats and scarves securely to prevent them from slipping over children’s eyes and obstructing vision.
- Avoid masks that cover the whole face or limit vision or hearing. If your child does wear a mask, make sure it fits securely, provides adequate ventilation, has eye holes large enough to allow full vision, and does not limit hearing.
- Swords, knives and similar costume accessories should be made of soft, flexible material. Toy weapons of any kind should be easily distinguishable from real weapons by color and design.

### Treats and Candy

- Serve a healthy dinner before trick-or-treating to help avoid the temptation of eating candy.
- Teach children not to eat any treats before an adult has examined them carefully for evidence of tampering.
- Carefully examine any toys or novelty items received by trick-or-treaters less than three years of age. Do not allow young children to have any items that are small enough to present a choking hazard or that have small parts or components that could separate during use and present a choking hazard.

### Decorations

- Use short, round tea light candles for jack-o-lanterns as they provide enough clearance to ensure that the pumpkin does not burn, and can still have the stem inserted at the top of the jack-o-lantern. Indoors, keep candles and jack-o-lanterns away from curtains, decorations and other combustibles that could be ignited. Do not leave burning candles unattended. Battery operated tea light “night lights” that simulate flames are a safe alternative to a candle in most cases.
- Keep candles and jack-o-lanterns away from landings and doorsteps where costumes could brush against the flame.
- Remove obstacles from lawns, steps and porches when expecting trick-or-treaters.