



Southwest Precinct Public Safety Newsletter

October 28, 2009

Dear Community Friends:

Halloween Safety Tips

Halloween is only a few days away. It is an important time to be extra vigilant for possible safety hazards so that we can all have a fun and safe Halloween. The following tips are from:

The American Academy of Pediatrics, www.aap.org/advocacy/releases/octhalloween.cfm

The National Crime Prevention Council <http://www.ncpc.org/resources/files/pdf/Halloween>

The Halloween Safety Guide: www.halloween-safety.com/

ALL DRESSED UP: Costume Safety

- Plan costumes that are bright and reflective. Encourage children to wear comfortable shoes that fit well. Make sure that costumes are short enough to prevent tripping, entanglement or contact with flame. Check that costumes are flame-retardant so the wearers aren't in danger near candlelit jack-o-lanterns and other fire hazards.
- Watch open flames from jack-o-lanterns as they can catch costumes and long wigs on fire.
- Consider adding reflective tape or striping to costumes and Trick-or-Treat bags for greater visibility.
- If a sword, cane, or stick is a part of your child's costume, make sure it is not sharp or too long. A child may be easily hurt by these accessories if s/he stumbles or trips.
- Masks should fit securely and allow children to see well and not hinder visibility.
- Consider non-toxic makeup and decorative hats as safer alternatives to a mask. Masks can be hot and uncomfortable and, more importantly, they can obstruct a child's vision—a dangerous thing when kids are crossing streets and going up and down steps.
- If using face paint, make sure it is nontoxic and hypoallergenic
- Hats should fit properly to prevent them from sliding over eyes.

Dressed Up and Dangerous?

- Halloween blood and gore are harmless stuff for the most part. But sometimes dressing up as a superhero, a scary monster, or a slimy alien from outer space—coupled with the excitement of Halloween—brings out aggressive behavior. Even fake knives,

swords, and guns can accidentally hurt people. If these objects are part of a child's costume, make sure they are made from cardboard or other flexible materials. Better yet, challenge kids to create costumes that don't need "weapons" to be scary and fun.



HEALTHY HALLOWEEN:

- Children shouldn't snack while they're out trick-or-treating, before parents have a chance to inspect the goodies. To help prevent children from munching, give them a snack or light meal before they go; don't send them out on an empty stomach. A good meal prior to parties and trick-or-treating will discourage youngsters from filling up on Halloween treats.
- Instruct children to bring all candy and treats home before eating it so that an adult can carefully inspect them in a well-lit place for tampering. Though tampering is rare, a responsible adult should closely examine all treats and throw away any spoiled, unwrapped or suspicious items. Any homemade treats or fruit should be inspected closely. Wash all fresh fruit thoroughly, inspect it for holes, including small punctures, and cut it open before allowing children to eat it.
- Try to ration treats for the days following Halloween.
- Parents of young children should remove any choking hazards such as gum, peanuts, hard candies or small toys
- Consider purchasing non-food treats for those who visit your home, such as coloring books or pens and pencils.

ON THE TRICK-OR-TREAT TRAIL

- A parent or responsible adult should always accompany young children when trick-or-treating.
- Older children should trick-or-treat in large groups in well-known neighborhoods. If your older children are going alone, plan and review the route that is acceptable to you. Agree on a specific time when they should return home. Have them carry a cell phone for quick communication.
- Try to get kids to trick-or-treat while it is still light out. If it is dark, make sure the children are carrying flashlights that work.
- Stick to well lit houses in familiar neighborhoods only. Only go to homes with a porch light on

and remind kids not to enter strangers' homes or cars.

- Obtain flashlights with fresh batteries for all children and their escorts.
- Remain on well-lit streets and always use the sidewalk. . If no sidewalk is available, walk at the far edge of the roadway facing traffic. Avoid taking shortcuts across backyards, alleys or playfields.
- Only cross the street as a group in established crosswalks (as recognized by local custom). Never cross the street from between parked cars or out of driveways.
- Remember, drivers have a hard time seeing people, especially at dusk. Don't assume the right of way. Motorists may have trouble seeing Trick-or-Treaters. Just because one car stops, doesn't mean others will.
- Motorists, please drive slowly all evening—you never know what creature may suddenly cross your path.
- Law enforcement authorities should be notified immediately of any suspicious or unlawful activity. Report any suspicious or criminal activity to 911.

Pumpkin Precautions

- Small children should never carve pumpkins. Children can draw a face with markers, then parents can do the cutting. Or, maybe they can paint and decorate the pumpkin rather than carving it. Pumpkin painting parties can be great fun for children and adults alike.
- Votive candles are safest for candle-lit pumpkins.
- Candlelit pumpkins should be placed on a sturdy table, away from curtains and other flammable objects, and should never be left unattended.

HOME SAFE HOME: “Unhaunting” Your House and Neighborhood

- Welcome trick-or-treaters at home by turning on your exterior lights. Check outdoor lights and replace burned-out bulbs.
- To keep homes safe for visiting trick-or-treaters, remove from the porch and front yard anything a child could trip over such as garden hoses, toys, bikes and lawn decorations.
- Move lit jack-o-lanterns off the porch where kids get bunched up if they trick-or-treat in groups.
- Wet leaves should be swept from sidewalks and steps.
- Restrain pets so they do not inadvertently jump on or bite a trick-or-treater.

Pranks That Can Be a Little Tricky

Halloween is notoriously a night of pranks— toilet papering a house or filling mailboxes with shaving cream are not unusual. Try to get a handle on your children’s plans before they go out. Explain to them that while you want them to have a good time, some tricks could hurt other people or vandalize property. Throwing eggs at a house may seem like fun ,but they need to know the other side of the coin as well; clean up and damages can ruin Halloween. Emphasize that you disapprove of vandalism. If they are caught vandalizing, make them clean up the mess they've made.

HALLOWEEN SAFETY TIPS FOR ADULTS

Adults like to have as much fun during Halloween as the children do. Adult Halloween parties tend to be much wilder than children's parties with dancing, alcohol use and catered food. Using common sense can make a party a great one and avoid anything that may ruin it.

- Keep an eye on the drinking; don't let it get out of hand. Take the keys away from anyone that may be driving. Have one person stay sober and offer to drive those people home who may be too intoxicated to drive.
- When deciding on a menu, check if anyone attending the party has food allergies that might be a problem. Common food allergies (dairy products, peanuts, shell fish) can put a damper on things.
- Parents of trick-or-treating kids can get so caught up in the fun themselves that they might forget some simple safety ideas (listed above) that could save everyone some trouble. Having a fun and safe Halloween will make it all worthwhile.

Resources To Keep You Informed

Police Blotter, <http://spdblotter.seattle.gov/>

Subscribe to SPD: Crime Blotter

<http://feeds.feedburner.com/SeattlePoliceSouthwestPrecinct>

Police Blotter, Megan Sheppard, West Seattle Herald

<http://www.westseattleherald.com/news/police%20blotter/>

West Seattle Blog, Tracy Record, Editor

http://westseattleblog.com/blog/?page_id=4988

Seattle Police Department main web page

<http://www.seattle.gov/police/>

Southwest Precinct Web-page

<http://www.seattle.gov/police/Precincts/Southwest/default.htm>

Seattle Police Crime Statistics

<http://www.cityofseattle.net/police/crime/stats.htm>

For **More Information** Call: **Benjamin Kinlow**, Crime Prevention Coordinator, (206) 684-7724 or email benjamin.kinlow@seattle.gov. Check out www.seattle.gov/police/precincts/southwest/prevention.htm