



CITY OF RICHMOND
DEPARTMENT OF FIRE & EMERGENCY SERVICES
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MEDIA ADVISORY

Halloween Safety Tips

Richmond, VA—the City of Richmond Department of Fire and Emergency Services reminds its residence to be safe during Halloween. Halloween plans typically include frightful activities and paying attention to a few safety tips can make the difference between having a frightfully-fun experience versus a frightfully-tragic one. Taking simple fire safety precautions, like making sure fabrics for costumes and decorative materials are flame-resistant, can prevent fires. A haunted house is a unique venue and with other things competing for your attention, it may take a little extra effort to identify exits and plan your escape; however, if there is an actual emergency or the ghosts and goblins simply get too scary, you'll be glad you did!

During a recent four-year-period, the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) estimates that decorations were the item first ignited in 1,150 reported home structure fires per year. These fires caused an average of three civilian deaths, 56 civilian injuries and \$24.8 million in direct property damage per year.

Here are some safety tips to ensure your Halloween is a “howling” safe time:

- Buy only costumes, wigs and props labeled flame-resistant or flame-retardant. If you are making your own costume, choose material that won't easily ignite if it comes into contact with heat or flame. Avoid using billowing or long trailing features.
- If your child is wearing a mask, make sure the eye holes are large enough so they can see out.
- Provide children with lightweight flashlights to carry for lighting or as part of their costume.
- Dried flowers, cornstalks and crepe paper are highly flammable. Keep these and other decorations well away from all open flames and heat sources, including light bulbs and heaters.
- It is safest to use a flashlight or battery-operated candles in a jack-o-lantern. If you use a real candle, use extreme caution. Make sure children are watched at all times when candles are lit. When lighting candles inside jack-o-lanterns, use long fireplace-style matches or a utility lighter. Be sure to place lit pumpkins well

away from anything that can burn including trick-or-treaters, doorsteps, walkways and yards.

- Remember to keep exits clear of decorations, so nothing blocks escape routes.
- Tell children to stay away from open flames. Be sure they know how to stop, drop and roll if their clothing catches fire. (Have them practice stopping immediately, dropping to the ground, covering their face with hands, and rolling over and over to put the flames out).
- Use flashlights as alternatives to candles or torch lights when decorating walkways and yards. They are much safer for trick-or-treaters, whose costumes may brush against the lighting.
- If your children are going to Halloween parties at others' homes, have them look for exits and plan how they would get out in an emergency.

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