

NEWS RELEASE

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FIREFIGHTERS GIVE LIVESAVING TIPS FOR HALLOWEEN

SUFFOLK, VA (October 24, 2016) Children dressed in costumes excitedly running door to door to trick-or-treat, festive decorations like glowing jack-o'-lanterns, paper ghosts, hay bales and dried cornstalks adorning front porches – these are some of the classic hallmarks of Halloween that make the holiday special for kids and adults alike. Unfortunately, these Halloween symbols and activities can also present lurking fire risks that have the potential to become truly scary.

In addition to the festive decorations listed above, costumes made with billowing or long-trailing fabric can catch fire easily. The same is true for dried flowers and crepe paper. When jack-o'-lanterns and other open-flame candle decorations come in contact with these materials, a fast-spreading fire can occur within moments. According to the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA), nearly half of decoration fires in homes occurred because the decorations were too close to a heat source.

“It is important for people to take basic precautions to make sure they have nothing other than a fun-filled Halloween,” says Lieutenant Chuck Chapin of Suffolk Fire & Rescue’s Fire Prevention Bureau.

- Keep decorations far away from open flames and other heat sources like lightbulbs and heaters. Remember to keep all of your home's exits clear of decorations so nothing blocks escape routes.
- Try a battery-operated candle or glow stick in jack-o'-lanterns. If you want to use real candles, be extremely careful. In this case, use long, fireplace-style matches or a utility lighter when lighting them inside jack-o'-lanterns. If there are children around, make sure they are watched at all times when candles are lit. Place the lit pumpkins well away from anything that can burn, and far away from driveways, doorsteps, walkways and yards -- anyplace where trick-or-treaters may walk.
- 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 up against the lighting as they walk to and from your door.
- Choose costumes that don't require long-trailing fabric. If your child is wearing a mask, make sure the eye holes are large enough so they can clearly see where they are walking to prevent trips or falls near dangerous or flammable items.
- Talk to your children and remind them to stay away from open flames, including jack-o'-lanterns with candles inside. Provide them with flashlights or glow sticks to carry for lighting as part of their costume.

So whether you hope to spook or bewitch your visitors, remember that you can still have a great time without putting anyone in harm's way by following these simple fire safety tips.

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