

To protect children participating in Halloween activities from fire and burn injuries, experts at the nonprofit National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) say to plan ahead. "Taking simple fire safety precautions, like making sure fabrics for costumes and decorative materials are flame resistant, can prevent fires," says Meri-K Appy, NFPA assistant vice president for public education. "Using candles greatly increases the chance of fire, so we encourage people to use flashlights to light pumpkins and for other spooky effects."

Decorations for special events, most often involving candles, account for an annual average of 800 home fires, causing nearly \$4 million in direct property damage, according to NFPA. Additionally, in the United States, more than 100 people die each year as a result of their clothing becoming ignited.

Halloween can be a fun celebration, but children should be closely supervised and their costumes made with fire safety in mind. The NFPA suggests the following guidelines for a safer Halloween:

- Purchase only those costumes, wigs and props labeled as flame resistant or retardant. When creating a costume, plan carefully to ensure that it won't easily ignite if it comes in contact with heat or flame. Costumes should be made without billowing or long trailing features that present a higher risk of ignition. Avoid highly flammable fabrics and accessories.**
- When planning party decorations, bear in mind that dried flowers and cornstalks are highly flammable. Keep crepe paper and other decorations well away from all heat sources, including light bulbs, heaters, etc. Decorating with candles should be avoided. Pumpkins can be safely illuminated with small, inexpensive flashlights. When decorating, remember to keep exits clear. Be sure children are supervised at all times.**
- With a little creativity, using flashlights instead of candles or torch lights to decorate walkways and yards is highly effective in creating a festive atmosphere and it's much safer for trick-or-treaters.**
- Instruct children to stay away from open flames or other heat sources. Be sure each child knows the stop, drop and roll technique in the event their clothing catches fire. (Stop immediately, drop to the ground covering your face with your hands, and roll over and over to extinguish the flames.) Instruct children who are attending parties at others' homes to locate the exits and plan how they would get out in an emergency.**

- **Provide children with lightweight flashlights to carry for lighting or as part of their costume instead of candles.**

"Planning ahead can help make this Halloween a fire-safe one," says Ms. Appy. For additional information on fire and burn prevention, contact your local fire department.