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Beware Witches and Goblins and Halloween Safety Hazards!

Halloween is a lot of fun for kids and adults alike. But this holiday is not without its hazards. Make sure your employees are aware of the risks to their kids and to their homes.

Start with the fire hazards. To keep homes and kids safe this Halloween, the National Fire Prevention Association (NFPA) recommends that your employees:

- Look at labels when buying costumes and make sure they say "flame-resistant" or "flame-retardant."
- If employees make costumes for their kids, they should use materials that don't catch fire easily and avoid features like long, loose sleeves, billowing or trailing capes, etc.
- Use flashlights and other forms of battery-powered illumination instead of candles-indoors and out. Even Jack-O-Lanterns can be more safely illuminated with flashlights.
- Be very careful when decorating with dried flowers, cornstalks, and crepe paper, all of which are highly flammable. Make sure these decorations are well clear of radiators, light bulbs, and other heat sources.
- Teach their kids how to "stop, drop, and roll" to put out flames should their costumes catch fire. And remind them to stay away from candles and other open flames.
- Remind kids about the family emergency plan and to locate exits for an emergency when they attend parties in the homes of other children.

If kids trick or treat, they need to take precautions. To keep kids safe while trick or treating, the U.S.

Consumer Product Safety Commission recommends the following precautions:

- For greater visibility, decorate or trim costumes with reflective tape that glows in the beam of a car's headlights. Bags or sacks can also be decorated with reflective tape.
- To easily see and be seen, children should carry flashlights.
- Costumes should be short enough to prevent trips and falls.
- Children should wear sturdy shoes that fit well.
- Hats and scarves should be tied securely to prevent them from slipping over children's eyes.
- Employees should think about applying a natural mask of cosmetics or face paint rather than letting a child wear a loose-fitting mask that might restrict breathing or obscure vision. If a mask is used, however, employees should make sure it fits securely and has eyeholes large enough to allow full vision.
- Swords, knives, and similar costume accessories should be of soft and flexible material.

Why It Matters...

- Halloween is one of the most popular holidays, but it's also one that is full of safety risks.
- According to NFPA, over 1,000 home fires a year are related to seasonal decorations, especially those involving candles.
- Every year, children trick or treating are hit by cars, and some are badly injured or killed.
- Some kids are attacked by older children, abducted by adults, or given tainted candy.

Parents should prepare kids for a safe evening. Safety experts recommend that the safest way to celebrate Halloween is to have a party for the neighborhood kids or to let kids to go a neighbor's party. But if employees let their kids go trick or treating, they should make sure they follow these basic safety rules:

- Don't let children trick-or-treat alone. Accompany the younger, and make sure older kids are part of a group.
- Teach kids that they should never to get in a car with anyone or enter anyone's house (unless it's a neighbor they know well and trust).
- Review the rules for crossing streets—for example, look out for cars, look both ways before crossing, and cross only at crosswalks and/or with the light.

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