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NEWS RELEASE (October)
Halloween Safety

People think of Halloween as a time for fun and treats. But about four times as many children (ages five through 14) are killed while walking on Halloween night compared to other nights of the year. And Halloween-night falls are a major cause of injuries among children.

“Many Halloween-related injuries could be prevented if parents supervised their children more closely during trick-or-treating,” said Sue Smith, Deputy Director of the Otsego County Department of Health.

“Halloween poses special risks for young pedestrians. Children usually spend most of their time outdoors during daylight hours, but Halloween activities usually take place after dark. Also, children going trick-or-treating often put themselves in danger by crossing streets in the middle of the block rather than at corners or crosswalks,” she said.

Parents tend to overestimate their children’s skills at street-crossing. Young children may lack the physical ability to cross a street quickly, and their small size means they are less visible to drivers. They may also lack the experience in accurately judging the speed and distance of traffic, especially at night.

“Children are likely to choose the shortest, rather than the safest, path across a street, and will often dart out from between parked cars,” Sue Smith said.

Adults and children need to make safety a priority on this annual day of make-believe. Before your child leaves the house on Halloween night, you should:

- Make sure that an adult will be supervising children under 12.
- Plan and discuss the route trick-or-treaters will follow.
- Provide a flashlight – one per person, if possible.
- Caution your child not to travel alone.
- Instruct your child to travel only in familiar neighborhoods and along an established route.
- Caution your child to stop only at houses or apartments that are well-lit, and never to enter a stranger’s home.
- Establish a return time.

Tell your children not to eat any treats until they return home and you have inspected the goodies.

Costumes should:

- Be made of approved fire-retardant materials.
- Be loose enough to wear over warm clothing.
- Be short enough that they won’t be a tripping hazard.
- Be made of light-colored materials.
- Have strips of reflective tape to make the child more visible.

Masks and accessories should:

- Not obstruct the child’s vision.
- Have nose and mouth openings and large eye-holes.
- Be made of flexible materials such as cardboard
- Be light-colored and trimmed with reflective tape.

Once back at home, Sue Smith advises parents to check treats to make sure that they have not been tampered with. Be especially careful with fruit – cut it open before allowing your child to eat it. And most importantly: if in doubt, throw it out!

For more Halloween safety tips, call the Otsego County Department of Health at 607-547-4230.

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