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Salisbury Fire Department Urges You to Stay Safe During Halloween and Avoid Frightful Fire Hazards!

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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.

Decorations were the first item ignited in an estimated average of more than 1,000 home structure fires per year during 2002-2005, according to the National Fire Protection Association, (NFPA), report "Home Structure Fires That Began With Decorations," (PDF, 80 KB). More than half of these fires were started by candles.

"There are many things that parents, kids, and adults can do to make sure that Halloween remains a very safe holiday," said Melissa Brown, Public Information Officer for the Salisbury Fire Department. "Make sure costumes purchased are labeled flame-resistant or flame-retardant, choose materials that will not easily ignite, and keep fire safety in mind when decorating your home, both inside and out."

Fire safety concerns are often unique at haunted houses and other spooky venues typically visited during this time of year. "It is important to know how to get out of a room or a building in case of emergency no matter where you are, and to teach kids to do the same," said Brown. "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!"

- 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.
- Also, make sure you and your children can be seen while out trick or treating. Glow sticks work well for spotting little ones in the dark. Stay out of the road and look for cars.