Headline: Precautions keep Halloween a treat for all

Deckhead: AAA offers tips, safeguards on ways to make sure everyone is safe

Halloween is synonymous with costumes and candy. It puts smiles on children’s faces and treats in their knapsacks. It’s a joyous night, but also one that could lead to dangerous situations.

Halloween is the deadliest day of the year for child-pedestrian fatalities. Children are three times more likely to be struck and killed by a car on the holiday than any other day of the year, according to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA). One-fourth of all pedestrian deaths, ranging from ages 5-14, occurred in the four days prior to Halloween.

Precaution – by parents and motorists – is the best way to keep children from harm’s way. AAA offers these tips to stay safe on Halloween:

**Parents**

* Trick-or-treat together. Parents should accompany young trick-or-treaters at least until the age of 12.
* Choose costumes wisely. Make sure your child is visible by selecting a light-colored costume, or by adding reflective tape. Choose disguises that don’t obstruct vision and opt for non-toxic face paint rather than masks. Check and adjust the length of costumes to avoid tripping.
* Have a plan. Review trick-or-treating precautions, including pedestrian- and traffic-safety rules. Plan and discuss the route your trick-or-treaters will follow. Teach children to stop only at well-lit houses and to never enter a stranger’s home or garage. Tell your children not to eat treats until they return home.
* Stay on the sidewalk. If there are no sidewalks, walk as far to the left of the road as possible, facing traffic.
* Shine a light. Give everyone a glow stick or flashlight to help them see and be seen by drivers.
* Cross with caution. Parents and trick-or-treaters should cross streets only at the corner, and never between parked cars or mid-block. Look left, right and left again, and be sure approaching cars come to a full stop before stepping into the roadway.
* Put down the phones. Parents and children should pay attention to their surroundings while walking. Talking, texting and social media can wait.

**Motorists**

* Avoid neighborhood shortcuts. If possible, keep off residential streets where trick-or-treaters are likely to be present.
* Slow down. What seems like a small difference can be the difference between life or death. Drive at least 5 mph below the posted speed limit to give yourself extra time to react to children, who might dart into the street. According to the AAA Foundation for Traffic Safety, a pedestrian is more than twice as likely to be killed if they are hit by a car traveling at 35 mph, compared to 25 mph.
* Watch for children. Trick-or-treaters might be more difficult to see at night, especially in dark costumes. Look for children walking on roadways, medians and curbs, particularly during popular trick-or-treating hours. Use extra caution when entering or exiting driveways.
* Remove distractions. Avoid any distraction that could take your attention away from driving, such as mobile phones.
* Don’t drink and drive. According to the NHTSA, more than 40% of traffic fatalities on Halloween involve a drunk driver.

Halloween is an opportunity to play dress-up and prowl neighborhoods for candy. Staying alert by proceeding with caution will help make sure the holiday is remembered for the right reasons.

Cutline: SAFETY FIRST – Halloween is a night of fun and thrills. Parents, children and motorists need to take precautions to avoid accidents from happening. Image: Seventyfour. Adobe Stock.