CALIFORNIA SCHOOLS
RISK MANAGEMENT

SAFETY MATTERS

RISK MANAGEMENT NEWSLETTER

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HALLOWEEN SAFETY TIPS FOR SCHOOL DISTRICTS

OBJECTIVE: To equip school administrators and staff with effective Halloween safety guidelines, ensuring that students can enjoy festivities safely and responsibly.

Halloween is a favorite holiday for students, full of costumes, candy, and fun. However, for school administrators and staff, ensuring safety during Halloween festivities is a priority. By implementing proper precautions and sharing Halloween safety tips, you can guarantee that students have a safe and enjoyable experience. To ensure a safe and enjoyable celebration, school administrators and staff should keep the following safety tips in mind for the holiday season.

School-Specific Activities

Organizing school-specific Halloween activities can help maintain a controlled and safe environment. Consider arranging pumpkin decorating, costume parades, or classroom parties. These events can be supervised, ensuring they align with the school's values and safety policies. If doing a "trunk and treat," ensure that all vehicles are set up in an area on campus that will be free of students before and after the event.

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School Halloween Costume Safety

While costumes are a central part of Halloween, they can present safety concerns in a school setting. Consider setting up a costume dress code to balance creativity with safety. Here are some school Halloween costume safety recommendations:

- **Visibility**: Ensure that costumes don't hinder vision. Masks should have proper ventilation or promote using face paint or makeup instead.
- **Fire Safety:** Clothing, accessories, and wigs should all be fire-resistant or flame-retardant.
- **Accessories:** Discourage the use of props or accessories that might create tripping hazards or pose risks to others. This includes footwear that fits well. Discourage high heels for those not accustomed to wearing them.
- **Weapons:** Prohibit costumes with realistic weapons, as they can cause confusion and safety issues. All accessory weapons should be short and flexible, and without any sharp points.
- **Cultural Sensitivity:** Encourage culturally sensitive costumes and discourage those that could be offensive or reinforce stereotypes.
- **Costume Parades:** If the school organizes costume parades, consider making them non-competitive. A non-competitive approach fosters a sense of inclusion and avoids any disappointment for students whose costumes may not win prizes.

Allergen Awareness & Candy Inspection

Halloween is synonymous with candy and treats, but many of these items contain common allergens like peanuts, dairy, or gluten, which can be dangerous for students with allergies. Encourage parents and guardians to provide allergen-free treats for school events or classroom celebrations. Distribute guidelines on allergen awareness to help prevent accidental exposures.

Even if a student doesn't have any known food allergies, schools should teach them the importance of not consuming any treats received during trick-or-treating until a parent or guardian has inspected them. Parents should check for any unwrapped or suspicious items and dispose of them.

Road Safety

Halloween often involves trick-or-treating, and many students will be walking or cycling home in the evening. Promote road safety among students, parents, and staff:

- **Visibility:** Encourage students to wear reflective clothing or carry flashlights when walking in the dark, making them more visible to drivers. Teach children to make eye contact with drivers before crossing in front of them.
- **Pedestrian Safety:** Teach students to use crosswalks and look both ways before crossing streets. Emphasize the importance of not darting out from between parked cars.
- **Cycling Safety:** For students who cycle, remind them to wear helmets and use hand signals when turning or stopping.
- **Driver Awareness:** Urge parents and drivers to exercise extra caution and vigilance on Halloween night, especially in residential areas where children are likely to be out and about. Encourage headlights to be kept on even before sunset to spot children from a distance.

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Safe Trick-or-Treat Guidelines

Provide safe routes and venue guidelines if the school sponsors or encourages trick-or-treating activities. Avoid areas with heavy traffic, and make sure these routes are well-lit. Encourage responsible adult supervision during these activities.

Deter Vandalism

Halloween can sometimes encourage pranks and vandalism. Schools should take proactive measures to prevent any potential damage. Ensure that school facilities are well-lit and monitored during Halloween events. Promote the idea that celebrating the holiday can be done without causing any harm to school property or the property of others. Check out *Twenty Tricks for Combating School Vandalism on Halloween* for more tips.

Emergency Preparation

Having an emergency response plan for school events and activities is crucial. It ensures that staff and students are prepared to act swiftly and effectively in the event of an accident, injuries, or security concerns. These plans minimize chaos, reduce the risk of harm, and ensure everyone knows their role in maintaining safety. Schools should ensure they have an up-to-date emergency response plan, and that teachers and staff are well-acquainted with these procedures.

While Halloween is about celebrating spooky fun, it's important to reinforce a safe and inclusive atmosphere. Encourage students to be respectful of one another's choices of costumes and themes, emphasizing that Halloween is for everyone. Some schools even provide some costume options for students from low-income families. You can ask parents and the community for donations to make it a low-cost way of promoting inclusivity.

By following these Halloween safety guidelines for schools, administrators, and staff can ensure that Halloween remains an exciting, safe, and memorable experience for students. These guidelines promote student safety and underscore the commitment to providing a secure environment during holiday festivities.

RESOURCES

- ***Learning A-Z.com***
- ***HealthyChildren.org***
- ***Safe Kids Worldwide***
- ***Public School Works***

This California Schools JPA fact sheet is not intended to be exhaustive. The discussion and best practices suggested herein should not be regarded as legal advice. Readers should pursue legal counsel or contact their insurance providers to gain more exhaustive advice.