



## **On a Night of Fun and Frights, Pedestrian Safety Should Be the Primary Focus**

*This Halloween – drivers, parents and children should slow down for safety*

**Washington, D.C.** – On a night when many children spend hours in close proximity to cars as they navigate through neighborhoods gathering candy, pedestrian safety should be a top priority for both drivers and parents. On average, twice as many kids are killed while walking on Halloween compared to other days of the year.

Halloween falls on a Saturday this year, and many kids will be out late trick-or-treating while it is dark – making it harder for drivers to see them. Because of this lack of visibility, it's important for drivers to take extra precautions to watch out for trick-or-treaters, especially around crosswalks. "The simple act of slowing down on neighborhood roads will not only make Halloween more enjoyable for everyone, but also it could save lives," said Moira Donahue, Director of the Walk This Way program, Safe Kids' pedestrian safety program.

"Pedestrian safety is not just the responsibility of the driver, however, parents can do their part to help kids stay out of the emergency room on Halloween by emphasizing safe pedestrian behaviors before they go out trick-or-treating," said Donahue. "Children younger than age 12 should not be alone crossing streets at night without an adult. If older kids are mature enough to go trick-or-treating without adult supervision, parents should make sure they go in a group and stick to a predetermined route with good lighting."

Top safety tips Safe Kids USA recommends for parents:

- **Cross the street safely at corners**, using traffic signals and crosswalks. Look left, right and left again when crossing and keep looking as you cross. Walk, don't run, across the street.
- **Walk on sidewalks or paths**. If there are no sidewalks, walk facing traffic as far to the left as possible. Children should walk on direct routes with the fewest street crossings.
- **Slow down and stay alert** – watch out for cars that are turning or backing up and never dart out into the street or cross in between parked cars.
- **Costumes can be both creative and safe**. Decorate costumes and bags with reflective tape or stickers and, if possible, choose light colors. Masks can obstruct a child's vision, so choose non-toxic face paint and make-up whenever possible instead. Have kids carry glow sticks or flashlights in order to see better, as well as be seen by drivers.

Top safety tips Safe Kids USA and FedEx recommend for drivers:

- **Slow down** in residential neighborhoods and school zones. Remember that popular trick-or-treating hours are during the typical rush-hour period of 5:30 to 9:30 p.m.
- **Be especially alert** and take extra time to look for kids at intersections, on medians and on curbs. Children are excited on Halloween and may move in unpredictable ways.
- **Slowly and carefully** enter and exit driveways and alleys.
- **Reduce any distractions** inside your car, such as talking on the phone or eating, so you can concentrate on the road and your surroundings.

While pedestrian safety is a main concern on Halloween, parents and kids should also be careful when dealing with candy. "While kids never want to wait to dive into their candy, it is best to check sweets for signs of tampering before children are allowed to eat them," adds Donahue. "Remind children to only eat treats in original and unopened wrappers."

In preparation for Halloween, 150 Safe Kids coalitions across the country will team up with Walk This Way program sponsor FedEx to provide kids with reflective materials to promote visibility, including trick-or-treat bags and zipper tags that can be attached to costumes, as well as important safety information to children, parents, and drivers.

For more tips on how to help kids become safer pedestrians on Halloween, as well as throughout the year, visit [www.usa.safekids.org/wtw/halloween2009.html](http://www.usa.safekids.org/wtw/halloween2009.html).

#### **About Safe Kids USA**

Safe Kids USA is a member of Safe Kids Worldwide, a global network of organizations with the mission of preventing unintentional childhood injury, the leading cause of death and disability to children ages 1 to 14. More than 600 coalitions in the United States and nineteen member countries worldwide bring together health and safety experts, educators, corporations, foundations, governments and volunteers to educate and protect families.

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