

Halloween safety during the pandemic

Wear a Mask But Don't Forget About Traffic Safety

Halloween is coming soon, and this year COVID-19 will surely make it different for many trick-or-treaters. While protection from the virus will be on most parents' minds, if they are allowing children to go out to trick or treat it is also important to protect them as they walk or ride bicycles on the sidewalks and roadways. Motorists and pedestrians can take steps to make this year's Halloween a safe one. Although Halloween comes before the change back to standard time this year, the days are getting shorter, and the nights are getting longer. With shorter days comes more night driving. Because nighttime driving is more dangerous, it requires extra attention from motorists as well as pedestrians.

The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration reports that nearly two-thirds of all fatal pedestrian crashes occur in low-light conditions. The large number of young pedestrians out on Halloween evening makes this an especially dangerous time. Here is a scary fact from the National Safety Council, children are more than twice as likely to be hit by a car and killed on Halloween than on any other day of the year. With social distancing, children walking in smaller groups may make it even more difficult for them to be seen by drivers.

That's why Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Rusk County reminds motorists, parents and children of the

following safety tips to keep in mind during Halloween and all year long.

Tips for Motorists

- Avoid using handheld electronic devices.
- Remember that as soon as you step out of your car, you become a pedestrian.
- Be especially alert for all road users, including pedestrians, at night.
- Slow down in areas where pedestrians are likely to be or where sight distances are limited. Keep your windshield clean. Watch for children walking on roads, medians, and curbs. Enter and exit driveways carefully.
- Be especially alert for children darting out from between parked vehicles and from behind bushes and shrubs. They're excited – and they are not paying attention.
- Never drink and drive – tonight or any night. If you are partying, designate a driver.

If you see a drunk driver or impaired pedestrian on the road, contact local law enforcement.

Tips for Parents

- Adults should always accompany children and supervise their "trick or treat" activities.



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- Teach children to "stop, look left-right-left, and listen" before they cross the street.
- Use a flashlight, and wear retro-reflective strips or patches on your clothing or costume to be more visible to motorists.
- Be certain that the mask does not obstruct vision or hearing.
- Ensure that costumes do not impede walking or driving ability.

Tips for Pedestrians (children and adults)

- Before crossing a street, stop at the curb or edge of the road and look left, right, and left again to be sure no cars are coming. Continue to check for traffic while on the street.
- Walk – never run – from house to house or across the road.
- Cross the street only at intersections and crosswalks.
- When crossing at an intersection with a traffic light, be sure to watch for turning cars. Obey all pedestrian signals.
- Walk on sidewalks whenever possible. If there are no sidewalks, walk on the left side of the street facing traffic.

Observing safety measures to protect from the virus is important, but don't forget that by taking some extra time to make sure drivers, pedestrians, and bicyclists obey the rules, Halloween can be a safe time for all.