



Consumer Watch

A Monthly Newsletter from the Connecticut Department of Consumer Protection

William M. Rubenstein, Commissioner

Dannel P. Malloy, Governor

www.ct.gov/dcp

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Suggested Links

www.ct.gov/dcp

Our website offers the latest and most comprehensive information that we have on dozens of consumer-related topics!

www.smartconsumer.ct.gov

Basic information to protect yourself and avoid scams!

<https://www.elicense.ct.gov>

To verify a license, permit or registration, or to run a roster of licensees. Also, the place for online renewal!

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Tips for Keeping the “Ow” Out of Halloween

Halloween – it brings shivers of delight to children and twinges of worry to their parents. When surveyed,* nearly four in five parents expressed one or more specific Halloween-related concerns. These included a broad range of injuries that their child might experience as a result of participating in the annual festivity (See table on page 2).



While incidents of tampered or poisoned treats are extremely rare, one-quarter of parents continue to be concerned about poisoning while at the same time, they underestimate the all-too-real threats to trick-or-treaters.

Thankfully, serious Halloween injuries aren't that common, but most often those that do occur -- and are severe enough to require a hospital visit -- are **eye injuries from sharp objects, burns from flammable costumes and traffic injuries**, according to the American College of Emergency Physicians. Most of these can be prevented, the physicians stress.

**Safe Kids Worldwide commissioned Harris Interactive to conduct a poll of parents of children ages 12 years and under. In September 2011, 935 parents responded to this first-ever study on Halloween safety
More, next page*

From the Commissioner

Product safety comes to mind this time of year because Halloween conjures up thoughts of costumes, make up and fun character props – all items that routinely undergo scrutiny by trained product safety inspectors behind the scenes, so that children can have a great time and not be unintentionally hurt. Also, Halloween typically marks the point that stores start advertising for the major December holidays, and you can be sure that toy safety is at the top of our list now and through the new year. Our Licensing Division is testing out the possibility of online licensing – a feature that has long been on everyone's wish list. With a bit of luck and a boatload of effort, we're proud to announce that we're well on our way. All the best,



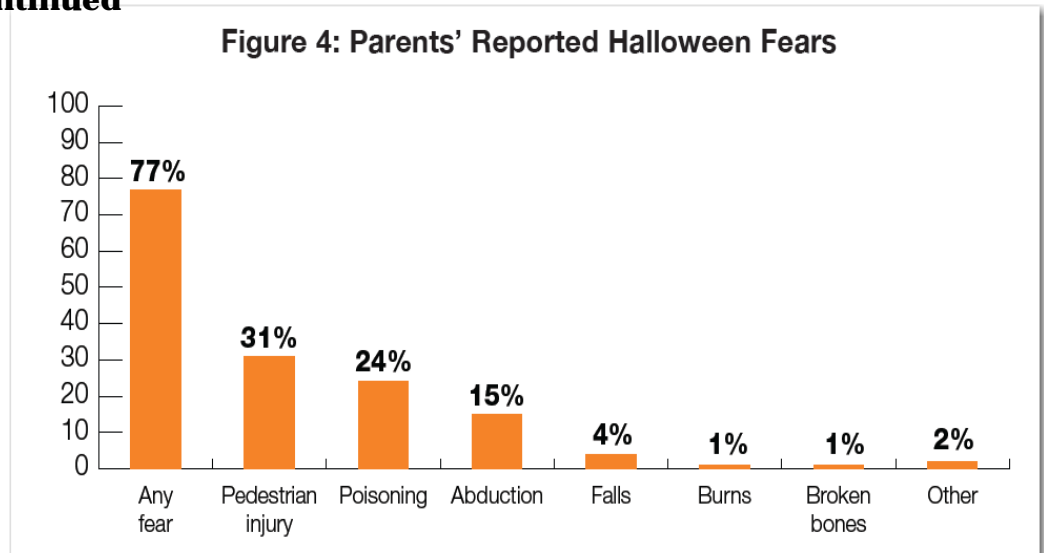
William M. Rubenstein

Bill

Halloween Safety, continued

Figure from: *Halloween Safety: A National Survey of Parents' Knowledge, Attitudes, and Behaviors*, SafeKids Worldwide, 2011

This chart from the **SafeKids study** illustrates parents' reported concerns about their child's safety on Halloween.



To help prevent accidents and injuries, parents should talk about safety with their children before leaving the house. SafeKids found that while 79% of parents have spoken to their child about Halloween safety, and 75% of parents never let their child trick-or-treat without an adult, only about one-third reported that they spoke to their kids **every year** about Halloween safety. Children need consistency and reminding, especially when excitement can easily get the best of them!

To prevent eye injuries, insist that any “props” that are used with the costume be soft and flexible, and discourage rough play among trick-or-treaters -- especially with props such as toy swords and laser wands.

Regarding traffic injuries, child experts point to five developmental factors that put children at higher risk. These are good to remember when heading out for trick or treat:

- Young children may not be able to cross the street as quickly as you or the older kids -- and drivers are not always able to see them, due to their smaller size.
- Children are likely to choose the shortest, rather than the safest, route across the street. This means they are more likely to run out from between parked cars, or not cross at the crosswalk.
- Children often disregard their peripheral vision and hearing, and sometimes lack impulse control.
- Children don't really understand the threats posed by traffic and can't anticipate drivers' actions.
- Children may even believe they are immune from harm, especially when in costume!

Want to help prevent traffic accidents on Halloween?



- A parent or responsible adult should always accompany young children.
- Make sure that everyone's shoes fit well and are easy to walk in so that children won't trip.
- Masks are not recommended since they really reduce a child's ability to see in all directions. If possible, use face paint.
- Use flashlights and reflective tape on bags and costumes to be more visible.
- Children need to stay on the sidewalk and cross at corners. If there's no sidewalk, walk facing traffic.
- Motorists out on Halloween must **slow down**. Watch for kids in dark clothes; watch for them on roadways, curbs, medians, and darting out from between parked cars. Be extra careful when pulling into or out of a driveway or alleyway.

Agency Pilots Online License Applications

On September 20th, the Department began accepting online license applications for a few select license and permit types, including pharmacy technicians, public service technicians and bedding sterilization. Users' initial response to online applications has been positive, and the time to process, review and approve these applications has been cut in half.

At the same time, the Department also implemented an automatic e-mail system that can give applicants up-to-the-minute reports on the status of their applications. While the online rollout is expected to be gradual, it will become more commonplace as the agency works to simplify and streamline its processes for applicants.

However, technophobes need not fear -- while more licenses will soon feature the option of applying online, paper applications will remain available for the foreseeable future!

Are Children's Products Safer Today?

Yes, thanks to enhancements brought about by technology, a sweeping product safety law, and stepped-up enforcement by the Consumer Product Safety Commission.

With America now a true global marketplace, more and more goods are brought in from overseas, where product safety rules are less stringent. However, toys and children's products in the U.S. are safer than ever, experts say. That's because the marketplace is benefiting from the 2008 Consumer Product Safety Improvement Act, which set tougher regulations on children's products, including stricter limits on lead. The Act was developed in response to 2007 -- "the year of the recall" -- when the country's product safety watchdog agency, the Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) had to recall more than 475 different items, including 276 toys. Millions of items were pulled from stores; almost all were made in China. A few of the toys and children's items recalled during that remarkable year included:

- Portable baby swings that entrapped youngsters, resulting in 60 reports of cuts, bruises and abrasions;
- Swimming pool ladders that broke, resulting in 127 reports of injuries, including lacerations requiring up to 21 stitches;
- Faulty baby carriers that resulted in infants falling out and injuring their skulls; and
- Easy-Bake Ovens that trapped children's fingers, causing burns.

The 2008 law increased funding and staffing to enable CPSC to respond to increased demands, placed stricter limits on lead levels in children's products, restricted certain chemicals in children's toys and child care articles, required mandatory testing and certification of some products, and required CPSC to create a public database of the products it regulates.

Since 2008, CPSC and its partner, U.S Customs and Border Protection, have screened more than 18,000 different imported consumer products and stopped at least 2,400 different toys and children's products at U.S. ports, preventing more than two million unsafe toys from reaching our stores.

Children's products with unsafe lead levels make up the bulk of halted products, followed by toys and other articles with small parts that present a choking hazard for children younger than 3 years old.

In Connecticut, the Department of Consumer Protection's authorized product inspectors administer recall effectiveness for the CPSC, and in 2012, conducted 29 checks in multiple retail locations across the state.

The CPSC product database, at www.SaferProducts.gov, allows anyone -- consumers, child service providers, health care professionals, government officials and public safety entities -- to submit an online report of harm involving a consumer product. This not only gets information quickly to the CPSC for investigation and possible action, but manufacturers, importers and private labelers also receive a copy of the injury report, and have the opportunity to comment. **All** information is published online at www.SaferProducts.gov for anyone to search.

Yes, children's products ARE safer today! We encourage everyone to join the effort to ensure the safety of items sold in the U.S. Before shopping for children's items, check out SaferProducts.gov for injury reports. If you run across an unsafe product, use the same website to report it so that CPSC and other consumers are aware of the issue.

True or False?

Answer, page 4

My neighbor has a serious, painful illness that his doctor believes could be helped with the use of medical marijuana. Even though the disease isn't one of the 11 approved illnesses, my neighbor can get a medical marijuana certificate if his doctor sends a copy of his file and a letter to the Medical Marijuana Program for its review and approval.

True or False?

Answer, page 4

Halloween, *continued from page 2*

Finally, ***to eliminate the risk of burns*** from flammable costumes, parents should be actively involved in choosing and preparing costumes, and in decorating around the home.

- Make sure costumes, wigs and accessories are made of flame-resistant materials.
- Use a glow stick or battery operated light instead of a candle in jack o' lanterns.
- If candles are used, keep them away from curtains and other flammable objects. Never leave lit candles unattended.



A few more tips...

Encourage the kids to eat dinner before trick or treating; they will be less likely to gorge on candy while they are out.

Older children going out without adult supervision should know how to reach parents and when to be home. Plan a route with them beforehand, and require that they follow that route. Kids going out unattended should have access to a phone to check the time and call home if needed.

Lastly, for trick-or-treaters visiting your home, keep the area safe by removing tripping hazards on your porch and walkways. Check your property for flower pots, low tree limbs, wires or garden hoses that may prove hazardous. If possible, keep your pets indoors during the "haunting hours," when scary costumes and loud noises might cause them stress. If you are going to hand out candy, leave a porch light on so visitors can see as they approach your home.

Have a safe and happy Halloween!

Free "Small Claims Court" Workshop October 10th

Get a free introduction to Small Claims Court; learn how to file a case and represent yourself in Court. UCONN law students trained in the small claims process are ready to help you prepare. Participants attending this free workshop will be more empowered to navigate the small claims process.

The workshop will be held **Thursday, October 10th from 6:00 - 7:00 pm** in the Reading Room of William F. Starr Hall at the Law School's Hartford Campus.

Directions to the UCONN Law School campus: www.law.uconn.edu/directions.

True or False? (from page 3) ANSWER:

The answer is False. The Medical Marijuana Program cannot add new illnesses or conditions to the eleven that have been included in statute as qualifying a patient for the use of medical marijuana. The Program's Board of Physicians can review petitions from the public for medical conditions, medical treatments, or diseases to be added to the list, and make a recommendation to the Department of Consumer Protection. The recommendation would then need to be approved by the Department and implemented by the adoption of a regulation. The Department of Consumer Protection's [regulations on medical marijuana](#) describes the petition process in full.