



North Tahoe and Meeks Bay Fire Protection Districts



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Chief's Corner: Sierra Sun and Bonanza

"Tips for a safe Halloween"

Halloween is just around the corner, and although having the best costume might be important; it's more important to be safe! As usual, we want you to have fun, but a night of spooktacular candy seeking can quickly turn haunting if simple appropriate precautions are not made.

According to the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) from 2009-2013; decorations were the item first ignited in an estimated average of 860 reported home structure fires per year. Nearly half of decoration fires in homes occurred because the decorations were too close to a heat source. These fires caused an estimated average of one civilian death, 41 civilian injuries and \$13 million in direct property damage per year. Forty – one percent of these incidents were started by candles; one-fifth began in the living room, family room, or den.

Improve the safety of your Halloween by following these tips from NFPA:

- **Costumes:** When choosing a costume, stay away from billowing or long-trailing fabric. If you are making your own costume, choose material that won't easily ignite if it comes into contact with heat or flame.
- **Visibility:** Provide children with flashlights to carry for lighting or glow sticks as part of their costumes. If your child is wearing a mask, make sure the eye holes are large enough so he/she can see clearly out of it.
- **Flammable decorations:** Dried flowers, cornstalks and crepe paper are highly flammable. Keep these and other decorations well away from all open flames and heat sources, including light bulbs and heaters.
- **Candles/jack-o-lanterns:** It is safest to use a glow stick or battery-operated candle in a jack-o-lantern. If you use a real candle, use extreme caution. When lighting candles inside jack-o-lanterns, use long fireplace-style matches or a utility lighter. If you choose to use candle decorations, make sure to keep them well attended at all times. Do not leave them near flammable objects or where trick-or-treaters may walk. Remind your children to avoid open flames. Make sure children are watched at all times when candles are lit.
- **Exits:** Remember to keep exits clear of decorations, so nothing blocks escape routes.



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Michael Schwartz joined the North Tahoe Fire Protection District as its Fire Chief in 2012, after serving 29 years with a neighboring fire agency. Along with his wife Jean, they have been a part of the Lake Tahoe community since 1978.