DPH Releases Halloween Guidance for Delaware Communities, Families

The Division of Public Health (DPH) released guidance Friday, Oct. 2, for Delawareans to safely participate in fall festivities, including Halloween activities, during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The new guidance categorizes activities by risk – low, moderate and high risk. Many traditional Halloween activities can be high-risk for spreading viruses. Delawareans can reduce that risk by organizing and participating in fun, low- or moderate-risk alternatives. The guidance emphasizes the importance of social distancing and face covering use when participating in any Halloween activities.

As the virus is still active in our communities, DPH continues to urge Delaware residents to practice everyday prevention steps: Wear a face covering, physically distance from others, wash your hands, and avoid gathering in large groups.

“We know this is typically a fun time of year for communities and families, and we absolutely want that fun to continue,” said DPH Director Dr. Karyl Rattay, “but it is more important than ever that we do so safely and in a way that does not further increase the risk of virus transmission for ourselves, our families, and our neighbors. We can still enjoy a happy and healthy Halloween this year even if it looks a little different from previous years.”

Activities that can be done at home with members of your household will pose less risk than traditional trick-or-treating. Low-risk activities include:

• Pumpkin carving and decorating your home.
• Hosting a virtual costume contest, Halloween get-together or drive-by decoration viewing with friends and neighbors.
• Having a Halloween movie marathon.
• Having a scavenger hunt (think Easter Egg hunt) in and around your home rather than going house to house.

Traditional trick-or-treating poses additional risk because of the large number of hands reaching in the candy bowls. If you choose to take part in some traditional Halloween activities, make sure to modify the activities and take precautions to lower risk, such as:

• Wear cloth face coverings at all times. (Hint: Most Halloween masks are NOT protective enough to be considered face coverings.)

• Provide treats without direct contact. For example, you could place individual treat portions on your porch and interact with treaters from at least 6 feet away with everyone wearing a face covering or through a window. Make sure to sanitize your hands between treat handling.

• Host open-air, socially distant gatherings. Don’t bob for apples.

• Find a farm where you can pick-your-own pumpkins or apples. Be sure to frequently sanitize, wear a face covering, and maintain 6-feet social distancing from individuals who don’t reside in your own household. If you visit a farm, store or stand, make sure it is one that is requiring everyone kindergarten age and up to wear face coverings and is taking other steps to keep people socially distanced and safe.

• Attend trunk-or-treat events with proper social distancing and face covering requirements in place along with other

precautions. Larger events (more than 250 people) must have a DPH-approved plan (plans may be submitted to HSPContact@delaware.gov).

Delawareans should avoid high-risk activities, where face coverings and other requirements are not enforced. Traditional door-to-door trick-or-treating in which treats are handed out to each child, without the modifications mentioned above, should not take place this year and need to be avoided.

In addition, all indoor activities with people outside of your household should be avoided, including:

• Any indoor parties, like costume parties.
• Indoor haunted houses unless they have proper precautions in place. Larger attractions (more than 250 people) must have a DPH-approved plan.

Individuals who have recently tested positive for COVID-19 and who are currently isolating from others, as well as those individuals who have recently been exposed to a person with COVID-19, should not participate in any in-person Halloween festivities.

Click here to read the Division of Public Health Halloween guidance.

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Individuals who have complaints about individuals violating public gathering restrictions should contact state or local law enforcement. Concerns that a business may be violating operating restrictions should be directed to: HSPContact@delaware.gov. Questions related to business re-openings or operations as businesses re-open should go to COVID19FAQ@delaware.gov.

Individuals with questions about COVID-19 should call Delaware 2-1-1, individuals who are deaf or hard of hearing can text their ZIP code to 898-211, or email delaware211@uwde.org. Hours of operation are 8:00 a.m. to 9:00 p.m. Monday through Friday; 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. Saturday and Sunday. Medically related questions regarding testing, symptoms, and health-related guidance can be submitted by email at DPHCall@delaware.gov.

DPH will continue to update the public as more information becomes available. For the latest on Delaware's response, go to de.gov/coronavirus.