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Halloween Fire Safety

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Background

Halloween is widely celebrated, particularly by children, and often involves costumes, decorations, and illuminated pumpkins. While generally low-risk, **incidents involving naked flames, unsafe costumes, and flammable decorations can lead to serious injury or fire** if appropriate precautions are not taken.

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Evidence shows that children are at increased risk of burns or serious injury when costumes come into contact with naked flames. The use of candles inside pumpkins, decorative lighting, and costumes made from highly flammable materials all contribute to this risk. Clear prevention messaging aimed at parents, carers, and households helps ensure Halloween remains **fun rather than dangerous**.

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Key Information

Common Fire Risks Associated With Halloween

- Costumes made from **flammable materials**, particularly capes or loose clothing
- Use of **real candles** inside pumpkins or decorations
- Decorations positioned too close to naked flames, heaters, or electrical sources
- Poor-quality or non-compliant products, often purchased online
- Children playing close to ignition sources
- Overloaded electrical decorations or fairy lights

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Costumes and Fire Safety

- Some Halloween costumes do **not meet UK safety standards**, particularly those sold cheaply or online
- All children's costumes and toys should meet **EN71-2 flammability standards**
- Passing a flammability test does **not** mean a product is fire-proof — it only limits flame spread speed
- Costumes should carry a **CE or UKCA mark** and be labelled as **flame-resistant**
- Encourage the use of **simple costumes**, avoiding:
 - Capes
 - Trailing fabric

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- Loose accessories
- Glitter or decorative fibres that ignite easily

Candles, Pumpkins and Decorations

- Avoid using **real candles** in pumpkins
- Use **battery-powered tea lights or LED alternatives**
- Keep decorations **well away from naked flames**, heat sources, and cooking appliances
- Ensure children do not play near lit candles or open flames
- Never leave candles **unattended**

Key Safety Messages to Reinforce

- Choose costumes that are **labelled, fitted, and flame-resistant**
- Keep children **away from naked flames** at all times
- Use **battery-powered lighting**, not real candles
- Supervise children closely during Halloween activities
- Avoid placing decorations near sources of heat
- Check electrical decorations are safe and switched off when not in use
- If clothing catches fire: **Stop, Drop, and Roll** – stop moving, drop to the ground, and roll to smother the flames. Call for help immediately.

Local & National Statistics

- Nationally, **student accommodation experiences dozens of fires each year**, with cooking identified as the leading cause
- Electrical faults, smoking, and candles are also common ignition sources
- Thousands of **false alarms** are recorded annually across purpose-built student accommodation, most linked to cooking
- In Hertfordshire, crews attend **regular incidents** involving student accommodation and shared housing, particularly during the academic year

These figures highlight the importance of **early prevention messaging**, especially during fresher periods and term starts.



Extra Resources

Trading Standards – Halloween Costume Safety

<https://www.tradingstandards.uk/news-policy/campaigns/halloween-costume-safety-campaign>

ROSPA – Halloween Costume and Safety Advice

<https://www.rospa.com/home-safety/advice/product/halloween-costumes/>

HFRS/Trading Standards – Child's Halloween Costume Tested for Safety

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mDxoOzMPt7k>

