



**Northern Ireland
Fire & Rescue Service**

Protecting Our Community

COMMUNITY INFORMATION BULLETIN No.16

HALLOWEEN/FANCY DRESS CLOTHING

Northern Ireland Fire & Rescue Service (NIFRS) has released this bulletin to raise awareness of the risks posed by some children's Halloween/fancy dress costumes should they become exposed to fire and to inform the public of the steps that they can take to minimise that risk.

Although Halloween/fancy dress costumes give the feel and appearance of being garments or clothing, they are by definition considered to be a 'toy' and as such are only required to meet the lower standard associated with toys (BS EN 71/2) in terms of their ability to withstand fire. The intention in The Toys (Safety) Regulations 2011 was that a child should be able to quickly drop the toy if it were to ignite and minimise their contact time with the ignition source. However, Halloween/fancy dress costumes in their 'play' context are a form of clothing, albeit temporary and often worn over the top of existing clothing, and it is questionable whether a child would have the ability to quickly discard their clothing were it to catch fire.

Should your child be wearing a Halloween/fancy dress costume that has tassels, capes and other adornments that could trail, particular care must be taken to ensure that they are kept away from any naked flame, otherwise the results may be catastrophic.

Recent media coverage supported by the Chief Fire Officers' Association (CFOA) and NIFRS has called for children's fancy dress clothing to meet the same fire safety standards as children's nightclothes. Whilst some retailers have voluntarily moved to ensure that their Halloween/fancy dress costumes meet this higher standard (The Nightwear (Safety) Regulations 1985), not all retailers have done so. Halloween/fancy dress costumes that meet this higher standard are often labelled as having 'low flammability' to BS 5722 (or to the European BS EN 14878 standard).

Even where clothing meets the standards of The Nightwear (Safety) Regulations 1985 and has a label which reads 'LOW FLAMMABILITY', it does not indicate a completely flameproof garment. The clothing will still catch fire and burn but it will do so at a slightly slower rate. It is for this reason that all garments bear a label with the red letters 'KEEP AWAY FROM FIRE'. It is also vitally important that where you have a low flammability garment that you follow the washing instructions carefully. Washing them at more than 50°C will reduce the fire resistance of the clothing over time.

If your child is wearing a fancy dress costume this Halloween:

- Avoid using a naked flame or candle in pumpkins; use a torch, glow stick or battery-operated candle.
- Keep children away from any naked flames, including sparklers.
- Be sure they know how to 'Stop, Drop and Roll' if their clothing catches fire.
- Choose a costume and mask that doesn't restrict a child's visibility.
- Wear woollen tights or 'heavy' trousers, eg, jeans, and a woollen jumper under the costume.
- Ensure your children are supervised at all times.

Community Information Bulletin No. 3 gives additional safety guidance regarding Halloween and for further information, contact NIFRS Headquarters on 028 9266 4221 or visit www.nifrs.org.