



COUNTY OF DEL NORTE
DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES
PUBLIC HEALTH BRANCH

400 L Street
Crescent City, California 95531

Phone
(707) 464-0861

Heather Snow, Director
Warren Rehwaldt, M.D., Public Health Officer

Fax
(707) 465-6701

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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SUBJECT: To Del Norte County Residents,

We have been getting a lot of questions this week about Halloween, what's allowed, what is recommended, etc.

The state health department has weighed in on this, and they do not recommend trick or treating, as it is considered extremely risky for people to mingle as sometimes happens on a busy Halloween night. People should also check out the CDC guidance about Halloween and risk of COVID. The document lays out a list of potential activities based on risk, and traditional trick or treating is high on that list. The CDC does not forbid anything, and so far the state health department has not done so either (although the state guidance document points out that "mingling" as described above is still forbidden, even outdoors) Some counties in California have released guidance or local health orders restricting this kind of activity on Halloween.

We have not done so. We prefer to recommend that people consider the risk to them, and plan accordingly. There are a number of households with elderly persons or other high risk persons who should not be answering the door for trick or treaters. Likewise, there are families that have high risk persons in their homes, who should not be taking children from door to door this Halloween season. The risk of trick or treating is simply too high for both those groups. In general, we would prefer that people in Del Norte follow the guidance from the State and Federal experts, and avoid trick or treating altogether.

Having said that, we anticipate that a lot of people are going to trick or treat anyway. So, here are a few tips.

For a home that wants to give out treats;

-try packaging candies 5 days in advance, into small gift bags or snack bags. Put them in a box, out of sight and out of mind until Halloween. If, by chance, you or someone in your household has the virus at the time you do this, by the time Halloween rolls around the virus that may have been on the candies will have dissipated.

-keep the candy bags in a box outside your door, and keep a safe distance from trick or treaters. Ask them to take a bag by themselves, without touching the other bags. Wear a mask!

For families that want to trick or treat;

-look for places that have done the above, or events such as “trunk or treat” that are following the advice about packaging. Wear COVID masks (costume masks by themselves do not protect you or others) and avoid crowding together with other families. Make sure that you have hand sanitizer with you as you trick or treat and use it frequently. When you are done and home, for any bagged candies, have you or your children wash their hands very well after emptying those bags, and throw the bags away. If you collect candy that is not pre-packaged, consider separating it and putting it “on the shelf” for a few days, so any virus on the candies themselves will dissipate.

And mostly, consider alternate fun things to do; virtual costume parties or contests, pumpkin carving at home, decorating contests, the list of ideas is long. Avoiding trick or treating of any kind is the safest way of celebrating the holiday and this will continue to be our recommendation as well as that of the State and Federal experts.

Typical adult Halloween celebrations are much higher risk, and we do not think that there is any safe way of having a typical Halloween costume party. The state of California still bans generalized gatherings of adults for that purpose. If, however, you can see way to limit a party to 3 households, and keep it outdoors, and still use COVID protection measures, such parties are no longer strictly forbidden under the new guidance from the state health department.

We still don't think that it is a good idea. In fact, we think it is a very bad idea as the risk for creating new cases of COVID in our community is high, especially because of the number of Halloween parties that typically happen on this particular day, all at the same time. The reward may not be worth the risk to the community, as one night of partying may create weeks of distress for homes and businesses throughout Del Norte County.

And, as always, wear a mask, use good hand hygiene, and keep your distance. Assume that you and everyone around you might be infected, it's the safest way to behave.

Here is the link to the CDC and their views about the holiday;

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/daily-life-coping/holidays/halloween.html>

Here is the State of California guidance on Halloween and Dia de las Muertos

<https://www.cdph.ca.gov/Programs/CID/DCDC/Pages/COVID-19/Guidance-for-Safer-Halloween-and-Dia-de-los-Muertos-Celebrations-during-COVID-19.aspx>

Dr. Warren Rehwaldt
Del Norte County Public Health Officer
Dept. of Health and Human Services
Public Health Branch
707-464-0861