

HOT TOPIC #31: October xx, 2020

COVID-19 updates from San Juan County around subjects on the minds of islanders

How to Halloween Safely (and yes, this really is Hot Topic 31)

With Halloween around the corner, kids and parents alike are wondering what Halloween should (and should not) look like. There are no Halloween specific regulations, but there are existing requirements that might impact Halloween, and there are certainly some commonsense precautions that should be followed.

First off, let's say this: San Juan County has done very well in our COVID response. Our last case was two months ago. That's due to an effective mix of the steps we've all taken to be safe (thank you!), and a series of regulations that seek to reduce interactions between households. No single approach is perfect, and there's always the risk of more cases, but we've done well.

However, we're at an extremely vulnerable moment right now. Let's face it, we're all relaxing as the lack of cases reassures us. But the reality is this: as interaction increases, so does risk. With the prospect of schools opening for in-person learning, with increasing social interaction, and with a slow loosening of guidelines, the risk is real. Add to that the realities of winter (indoor time, holiday travel, colds & flu returning), and the challenge of keeping our community safe is real.

This is said not to plant fear, but to encourage both caution and ongoing thoughtfulness and care for our community. Now for Halloween:

Let's start with some things that are clearly **bad ideas**:

-Not wearing a cloth face covering if you will be seeing people outside your household. (BTW: Make sure the face covering fits snugly over your nose and mouth.) And Halloween masks don't count, unless the costume is of a healthcare worker or responsible citizen wearing a face covering.

-Being in close contact (less than 6 feet) with people outside of your household.

-Doing anything indoors other than with members of your household.

-Leaving the house with symptoms of COVID or recent exposure to someone diagnosed with COVID.

So, what does that mean?

-No Halloween parties.

-No groups of trick-or-treaters.

-No directly handing out candy to trick-or-treaters.

But it also means that there are some creative ways to keep the Halloween tradition strong. Be creative, use commonsense, be thoughtful. Some ideas:

-Individual bags of treats that kids can pick up directly (no large groups, no congregating). Feel free to mask up, stay six feet away, and enjoy the costumes. This could be a great idea if local businesses, a neighborhood, or a group of volunteers want to organize an event.

-Drive-thru trick-or-treating via an event organized by the local community.

There's nothing especially complex about this. By now, we all know what it takes to increase our chances of staying healthy. Keep apart. Mask up. Wash your hands.

And, feel free to have fun. It might not be like years past, and it certainly isn't what any of us would choose, but the islands have done well, there is much to celebrate, and Halloween is still a good time.

Thanks islanders. We're slowly getting through this with your conscientious grace and care.