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TEN THINGS PARENTS CAN DO TO MAKE HALLOWEEN SAFER

The National Center for Missing & Exploited Children Tells Parents How They Can Build Safety into Halloween this Year

ALEXANDRIA, VA October 15, 2009 – Halloween is one of the most exciting times of the year for children, but sometimes the most hectic for parents. Nearly 94 percent of children between the ages of four and twelve participate in Halloween activities each year. The National Center for Missing & Exploited Children (NCMEC) reminds parents to take a moment to consider basic safety precautions that will make Halloween a safer night of fun.

- **CHOOSE** bright, flame-retardant costumes or add reflective tape to costumes and candy bags so children are easily seen in the dark. In addition, carry a glow stick or flashlight.
- **PLAN** a trick-or-treating route in familiar neighborhoods with well-lit streets. Avoid unfamiliar neighborhoods, streets that are isolated, or homes that are poorly lit inside or outside.
- **NEVER** send young children out alone. They should always be accompanied by a parent or another trusted adult. Older children should always travel in groups.
- **ALWAYS** walk younger children to the door to receive treats and don't let children enter a home unless you are with them.
- **BE SURE** children do not approach any vehicle, occupied or not, unless you are with them.
- **DISCUSS** basic pedestrian safety rules that children should use when walking to and from houses.
- **CONSIDER** organizing a home or community party as an alternative to "trick-or-treating."
- **MAKE** sure children know their home phone number and address in case you get separated. Teach children how to call 911 in an emergency.
- **TEACH** children to say "NO!" or "this is not my mother/father" in a loud voice if someone tries to get them to go somewhere, accept anything other than a treat, or leave with them. And teach them that they should make every effort to get away by kicking, screaming and resisting.
- **REMIND** children to remain alert and report suspicious incidents to parents and/or law enforcement.

"Child safety is important year round, but Halloween is an especially important time for parents and children to pay extra attention to their surroundings and not let their guard down," said Nancy McBride, National Safety Director of NCMEC. "It is important that parents exercise a few basic safety precautions to help ensure that Halloween is both fun and safe."

This year the National Center for Missing & Exploited Children observes its 25th anniversary. NCMEC has played a role in the recovery of more than 138,500 children. Today more children come home safely than ever before. In 2008, NCMEC helped recover more children than any other year in the organization's 25-year history raising the recovery rate from 62% in 1990 to 97% today. And more of those who prey on children are being identified and prosecuted. Yet too many children are still missing

and too many children are still the victims of sexual exploitation. There is much more that needs to be done.

About the National Center for Missing & Exploited Children

The National Center for Missing & Exploited Children is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization. Since it was established by Congress in 1984, the organization has operated the toll-free 24-hour national missing children's hotline which has handled nearly 2,400,000 calls. It has assisted law enforcement in the recovery of more than 142,100 children. The organization's CyberTipline has handled more than 741,200 reports of child sexual exploitation and its Child Victim Identification Program has reviewed and analyzed more than 27,651,800 child pornography images and videos. The organization works in cooperation with the U.S. Department of Justice's office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention.

To learn more about NCMEC, call its toll-free, 24-hour hotline at 1-800-THE-LOST or visit its web site at www.missingkids.com.