

# Opinion: Important to keep pets safe

By California Emergency Management Agency

The fall season is a festive and fun time of year for children and families, but a stressful and dangerous time for many pets. The California Emergency Management Agency (CalEMA) reminds Californians to take special precautions to ensure the safety of their pets, and those who may come in contact with them, during this season of entertaining and celebration:

\* Do not leave your pet out in the yard unattended during high foot traffic community events and visiting hours. There are plenty of horror stories of vicious pranksters who have teased, injured, stolen, and even killed pets during some festivities.

\* Keep pets, especially outdoor cats, inside several days before and several days after high foot traffic community events and visiting hours; cats in particular may be at risk from children's pranks or other cruelty-related incidents.

\* Candies are not for pets: Chocolate is poisonous to a lot of animals and tin foil and cellophane candy wrappers can be hazardous if swallowed.

\* Keep pets away from lit outdoor lanterns: Pets may knock them over and cause a fire. Curious kittens especially run the risk of getting burned.

\* Do not dress your dog or cat in a costume unless you know for sure that he or she loves it. Otherwise, it puts too much stress on the animal. If you do dress up your pet, make sure that the costume is not annoying or unsafe; it should not constrict his/her movement, hearing, or ability to breathe or bark. Also, there should not be small, dangling, or easily

chewed-off pieces on the costume that your pet could choke on. Pets should always be supervised, especially one that is dressed up in a costume. If your pet goes trick or treating with you, make sure they are always on a leash!

\* All but the most social of dogs and cats should be kept in a separate room during visiting hours; too many strangers in costumes can be scary for a dog or cat.

\* When opening the door for visitors, be very careful that your dog or cat does not dart outside. It is best to keep them locked in a separate room where they can feel safe away from all the noise.

\* Make sure that your dog or cat is wearing proper identification (ID tag, license, microchip, tattoo, etc.). If for any reason they escape and become lost, you increase the chances that they will be returned to you.

For more information on pet safety, visit the American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals online, your veterinarian or your local department of animal control.