

Public Health Madison and Dane County: Freakfest 2020 cancelled, residents reminded to avoid Halloween gatherings

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The City of Madison, the University of Wisconsin–Madison, and Public Health Madison & Dane County are strongly recommending that people celebrate Halloween with members of their household and avoid holding or attending gatherings.

Parties and gatherings that are part of Halloween in a normal year pose a risk to the public due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Madison’s largest Halloween event, Freakfest, has been cancelled.

“As we work to keep residents in our community safe and healthy throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, it is common sense that there will be no organized Freakfest this year. It is important that we don’t welcome revelers in large groups, as those gatherings will violate Public Health regulations and endanger both those gathering and our whole community. Stay safe and stay home,” said Mayor Satya Rhodes-Conway.

Public Health Madison & Dane County highly recommends not holding a Halloween party this year. If a gathering is held, a number of requirements need to be met to comply with Emergency Order #9:

- Indoor private gatherings must be limited to 10 people, not including household members. Everyone must maintain physical distance. Everyone must wear masks.

- Outdoor private gatherings must be limited to 25 people, not including household members. Everyone must maintain physical distance. Masks are recommended. If outdoors in an enclosed space, like a park shelter, masks are required per the [State of Wisconsin Emergency Order #1 PDF](#).

If you visit a restaurant or tavern:

- Everyone must remain seated at physically distanced tables if they visit a restaurant. Restaurants are limited to 25% capacity and everyone must have a mask on when not eating or drinking.
- Taverns may only provide outdoor service. Everyone must remain seated at physically distanced tables and have a mask on when not eating or drinking. Customers may enter bars only to order, pick-up, and pay for food or beverage.
- [Emergency Order #9](#) lists all requirements.

Public Health Madison & Dane County will be working with the City of Madison Police Department, the UW-Madison Office of Student Conduct and Community Standards and UW Police Department, as well as with the City of Madison Attorney's Office, to ensure compliance with the Public Health Order.

Individuals or businesses violating the Order may be issued citations. Under the relevant Madison General Ordinance, if a business violates the allowed capacity or an individual hosts a gathering, each person over the limit in the Order can result in a penalty of \$1,000. For example, an establishment with an occupancy capacity of 100 is required under the Order to limit indoor capacity to 25%, which is 25 people. If this establishment has 100 people inside, they face a potential forfeiture of \$75,000 plus court costs and fees.

"House parties and other gatherings contrary to the order will not be tolerated. The Madison Police Department expects residents will abide by it. Violators may be cited. Please stay safe, enjoy the night, but keep yourself and others safe during these unprecedented times," said MPD Central District Captain Kelly Donahue.

UW-Madison students can also expect follow-up from the university if students violate the order.

"We expect our students to abide by the Public Health Order and to celebrate Halloween responsibly. We have seen the majority of our students wearing face

masks, practicing physical distancing, avoiding large gatherings, and showing a commitment to take care of our community. Students who do not follow the expectations clearly defined in the Public Health Order will be referred to the Office of Student Conduct and Community Standards,” said Christina Olstad, Dean of Students at UW–Madison.

For guidance on Halloween activities, such as trick-or-treating, please see the [Public Health Madison & Dane County's factsheet. PDF](#). Public Health highly recommends going out only with members of your household, wearing a mask, and staying at least 6 feet away from others. If you choose to give candy out, leave it out on your porch instead of directly handing it to people.

“For the health and safety of our community, I hope that all individuals continue to follow public health orders and help reduce the spread of this virus,” said Janel Heinrich, director of Public Health Madison & Dane County. “Thank you for all your efforts to keep our community safe.”