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DAILY NEWS, TUESDAY, OCTOBER 30, 2001

Security on the march for Halloween festivities

By ELIZABETH HAYS, AMY SACKS and OWEN MORITZ
DAILY NEWS WRITERS

New York police will be on heightened alert tomorrow for Halloween, particularly for the wild Village Halloween Parade.

Police officials said security also will be increased at cemeteries, schools and houses of worship as the NYPD prepares for a day known for its festive, all-night parties — just seven weeks after the terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center.

A normal contingent of 2,000 cops will patrol the 28th annual Greenwich Village parade, but they'll be under orders to keep an eye out for suspicious packages and the like, officials said.

Police hazardous material teams, which already handle 100 false alarms a day, also will be on standby.

According to hobby stores and costume dealers, children and adults who are still children at heart are intent on celebrating Halloween — but with a difference.

The older ones are choosing police and firefighter costumes, biohazard suits, Statue of Liberty and Uncle Sam outfits and anything with a patriotic theme — along with Mayor Giuliani masks.

"They used to buy them [Giuliani masks] to lampoon him in a protest," said Tony Bianchi, part-owner of Halloween Adventure in Manhattan. "Now they're like collector's items."

In the Bronx, Wayne Baker, owner of Frank Bee Costumes, said he also is selling lots of firefighter and police costumes, though without the NYPD and FDNY insignias. But, he added, kids still "want to be their favorite movie or cartoon character."

"Children are still great," Baker said. "They still want to be Elmo, a Power Ranger, Cinderella, Harry Potter or Buzz Lightyear."

Hobby stores and costume dealers said there are few requests for Osama Bin Laden masks. Grim Reapers, a Halloween tradition, are still selling, though not as well as in the past.

Meantime, schools across the city said yesterday that they plan to go ahead with their annual parties, parades and costume contests.

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OLD FLAME At Halloween Venture, cop and firefighter costumes are sold out and Statue of Liberty masks are going fast.

"We've done it every year. We didn't want to stop doing it now," said Bill Stevens, an assistant principal at LaGuardia High School in Manhattan, which sponsors a Halloween parade and gives out awards for the best costumes.

Safety first

At the same time, administrators acknowledged this is far from a normal Halloween. So, along with the usual festivities, school officials are emphasizing safety.

Pearl Schulson, principal of Public School 175 in Rego Park, Queens, said her school decided to go ahead with the evening Halloween party the Parents Association sponsors each year at the school.

But besides extra security, the school is encouraging children to avoid costumes that celebrate violence.

"We've been talking a lot about unsung heroes," Schulson said. "And we told them it would be wonderful if they wanted to dress up as police officers and firefighters."

Don't be surprised if those who come trick-or-treating to your door are equipped with cell phones. The word on the street is that parents are keeping a watchful eye on their children as they forage for fun and candy.

With Alice McQuillan

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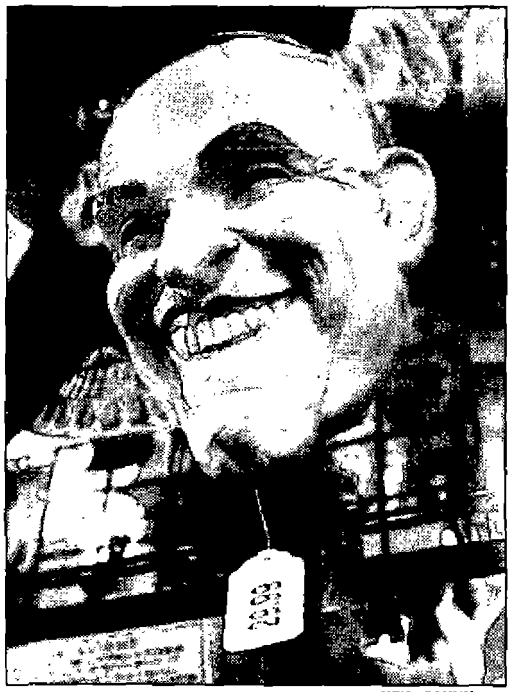

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FACE IT Masks of Mayor Giuliani are popular item at Halloween Venture on Fourth Ave. in Manhattan. Customer Allison Tigard (r.) looks at lone Rudy mask in the store.

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