

The Columbus Dispatch

Why isn't central Ohio trick-or-treating always on Halloween?

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Most areas this year are holding trick-or-treat for about two hours on Thursday, Oct. 29, the day that the Mid-Ohio Regional Planning Commission (MORPC) recommended for 2015.

Others, such as Worthington, Powell and Delaware, will celebrate on Halloween. Then there are the towns that chose Friday, Oct. 30, or the lone Ashville, which celebrates for an hour-and-a-half on Sunday, Oct. 25.

For parents of trick-or-treaters and for residents trying to figure out when to stay near the door with a bucket of candy, the scheduling has been a decades-long frustration.

>> [From the archives | Historians, researchers unsure why Beggars Night isn't on Halloween](#)

Columbus resident Bill Cosgrove echoed many others' sentiments when he wrote a letter to the editor in 2004.

"I love Columbus and consider it my home since moving here in 1990," Cosgrove said. "But I have grown weary of having to ask, with a straight face, 'When is Halloween this year?'"

[Until Halloween 2005](#), when MORPC switched to its current scheduling algorithm and trick-or-treating finally coincided with Oct. 31, Columbus hadn't scheduled the event on Halloween in at least 90 years.

[The tradition had been to hold trick-or-treating on the night before Halloween](#)-- unless Oct. 30 fell on a weekend, when the event might overlap with church services or high-school and college football games.

The custom developed in part because [Columbus once held an annual Downtown Halloween party](#) and scheduled "Beggars Night," as it's sometimes called in central Ohio, around the celebration. The party was halted in 1954 because of too-rowdy revelers, but the Oct. 30 scheduling continued for decades.

Dispatch stories from the late 1980s tell of a time when cities and townships set trick-or-treat dates, but children would show up on doorsteps asking for candy on both the designated night and on Halloween.

Then there were the residents who slammed doors in the faces of trick-or-treaters who showed up on any night other than Halloween, regardless of what the city had announced.

"It was chaos," a Sharon Township resident told *The Dispatch* in 1988.

In 1993, [MORPC began releasing suggested trick-or-treat dates](#) in an effort to get central Ohio cities to settle on a uniform day.

Local jurisdictions always have the choice to set trick-or-treating on that day or decide on a different day, said MORPC spokeswoman Bernice Cage.

MORPC's scheduling algorithm: If Halloween falls on a Friday, Saturday or Sunday, trick-or-treat would be held the Thursday before Oct. 31. If Halloween falls on a Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday or Thursday, trick-or-treat would be held that day.

The algorithm was developed to provide the most convenient date for families, Cage said. If one child is supposed to be at a Friday-night football game and another wants to go trick-or-treating, it's difficult to coordinate between parents when the family also wants to pass out candy to trick-or-treaters who visit their home.

Most central Ohio communities now follow the MORPC recommendation, and communities that set a different date do their best to make the decision clear to residents.

"I think a couple of [jurisdictions] have really stuck to that promise and posted it on their websites and other places," Cage said. "Their residents aren't calling us asking what day it is this year."

Central Ohioans who think Beggars Night should always happen on Halloween are in luck: MORPC has recommended Oct. 31 trick-or-treating for 2016, 2017, 2018 and 2019.