



Think Safe. Think Family.™

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LOUISIANANS, LET THE FESTIVITIES BEGIN!

Do you bleed PURPLE, GREEN and GOLD?

Do sirens trigger a smile because you know a parade is near? If so, the spirit of Carnival has captured your heart. Mardi Gras, that time of incredible celebration in South Louisiana, is upon us. Tourists from around the world come to experience what we have to offer. As you hit the crowded streets chanting, *“Throw me something Mister,”* don’t leave your safety mindset behind. Whether you’re chasing chickens in Mamou or catching coconuts at Zulu, remember to **Think Safe. Think Family.**

Step It Up!

At other times you may use these to change a light bulb or get into the attic, but during a time where it is raining stuffed cats and dogs, showering doubloons, or down-pouring beads there’s only one purpose for climbing a ladder – to get more stuff! If you plan on elevating your status on the parade route or perching your child on top of a ladder, don’t forget...

- **THREE-POINT CONTACT.** Maintain three-point contact with your ladder: one hand, two feet or two hands, one foot.
- **CURB-SIDE APPEAL.** Never place ladders in street intersections. The best placement is on the median or sidewalk. And, make sure your ladder is as far back from the curb as it is tall. This will prevent a falling ladder from throwing occupants into the path of an oncoming float.
- **STAY GROUNDED.** Set all four legs of the ladder on firm, level ground. Have an adult stand on the ladder whenever children are seated on top, for added stability.
- **A THRONE OF YOUR OWN?** Plan on seating your little ones on top of a ladder? Make sure the seat has a retaining bar and a safety strap that goes from the bar, between the child’s legs, to the bottom of the seat. This may prevent a small child from slipping beneath the bar.
- **TAKE A FIRM STAND.** Stand in the center of your ladder to avoid tipping. And never stand on the top rung or on the paint can holder – this goes for the wee ones too! Always check your ladder weight limits.



Dress It Up!

Costumes are a favorite part of festival season. Dressing appropriately can be fun as well as life saving. But don't forget, the weather in Louisiana is as unpredictable as parade start times so check your local weather station and dress accordingly.

- **PEEPER-KEEPERS.** Wear sunglasses to protect your eyes from the sun as well as a stray throw.
- **JUST SAY NO – TO UMBRELLAS.** Pack ponchos and raincoats for afternoon showers. Not only are umbrellas a pain to tote around on the parade route, but they are a hazard waiting to happen in a crowded space.
- **DON'T BE A VICTIM.** Wear fitted clothes and keep your valuables in your front pockets. Ladies, leave your purses at home. Unfortunately, we must keep in mind that there are folks more interested in catching what is in our pockets than trinkets from the parade.
- **WHO IS THAT MASKED MAN.** Masking can be extra fun – just be sure to select costumes that allow you to move freely, see and breath, and pick materials that are fire-resistant. If we are in for a cold Mardi Gras, choose a costume that will easily fit over a jacket or sweats.



Going for the Gold? Chart a Course for Success

Parade-goers in search of that elusive best throw will sometimes abandon all safety-sense. Ever seen anyone run in front of a moving float for a bouncing ball? How about jumping over police barricades to get a spear? We have probably all witnessed these actions as well as have been pushed out of the way by someone eager to chase a float to get a 36" plastic necklace. Don't throw away the fun with a mistake that could put you in danger. Floats are large vehicles with limited visibility and no ability to quickly stop. Crowded areas and new cities can be confusing for adults and children alike. Create a safety plan before you leave the house.

- **TEACH YOUR CHILDREN WELL.** Write your phone number, the child's name and any other pertinent information on a piece of paper and put it in your child's pocket. Let the child know it's there and to share it with a police officer if he or she gets lost. Take a picture of your child – so you can share it with others in the event of a separation.
- **TEACH YOUR CHILDREN WELL – PART 2.** Parade etiquette is just as important as learning one's ABC's. Doubloons are great! But don't justify stepping on your neighbor's hand or pushing someone over. Beads that glow are great! But don't justify chasing after a float or jumping over a police barricade. Remind kids, *"Don't worry, there are plenty of great throws for everyone, be patient, have fun and don't forget to yell, 'Throw me something, Mr...'"*
- **KNOW WHERE Y'AT.** Know where you are going before you leave home. Select a well-lit viewing spot with nearby parking. And be sure to avoid areas you know to be unsafe.
- **PLAN A LANDMARK MEETING.** Take note of any landmarks near where you plan on going, and let everyone know that should you become separated – head to this destination.
- **A PHOTO FINISH.** Have a camera in your phone? Snap a picture of your parking spot. Be sure to capture the street sign or other identifiers. No camera phone? Jot down where you have parked on a piece of paper that you securely tuck away.
- **PLAY THE NUMBERS.** Exchange cell phone numbers with all in your party - before heading to the parades. You may also want to write your cell phone number on your child's arm with a semi-permanent marker. Sure it will take a while to scrub him clean, but that's better than having him unable to reach you if lost.
- **BABY'S 1ST MARDI GRAS?** Nothing better than a shiny, bright new object to entertain baby! Except when it is a potential choking hazard. Be sure to keep all beads, small trinkets and plastic bags out of reach. And keep a close watch on toddlers and small children who may wander onto the parade route.

Mardi Gras is just one of the many exciting festivals we enjoy in Louisiana. With a little thought to safety, the fun and festivities will continue to flow this carnival season. So, as you *'Laissez les bon temps roulez'* remember to **Think Safe. Think Family.**