

STANDARDS FOR TEMPORARY HAUNTED HOUSES, GHOST WALKS, AND SIMILAR EVENTS

*For Use by Unidocs Member Agencies or where approved by your Local Jurisdiction
Authority Cited: 2010 California Fire Code (CFC); 2010 California Building Code (CBC);
Title 19, California Code of Regulations (CCR)*

A. Scope

These regulations shall apply to temporary Haunted Houses, Ghost Walks, or similar amusement uses where decorative materials and confusing sounds and/or visual effects are present.

B. Definitions

For the purposes of this document, the following definitions shall apply:

Decorative Materials - All materials used for decorative, acoustical or other effect (such as curtains, draperies, fabrics, streamers, and surface coverings) and all other materials utilized for decorative effect (such as batting, cloth, cotton, hay stalks, straw, vines, leaves, trees, moss and similar items), including foam plastics and other materials containing foam plastics.

Haunted House - A temporary or permanent building or structure, or portion thereof, which contains a system that transports passengers or provides a walkway through a course so arranged that the means of egress are not apparent due to theatrical distractions, not visible due to low illumination, are disguised or are not readily available due to the method of transportation through the building or structure.

Ghost Walk - Similar to a Haunted House, and may include both indoor and outdoor areas where the means of egress is similarly not readily identifiable.

C. Allowable Structures

Haunted Houses, Ghost Walks, and similar amusement uses shall only be located in structures that comply with the provisions for Special Amusement Buildings in accordance with the California Building Code. Tents or membrane structures may be used when in compliance with all applicable requirements of this regulation and when the total floor area is less than 1,000 square feet and the travel distance to an exit from any location is less than 50 feet.

D. Permits

1. A permit application shall be submitted a minimum of two (2) weeks prior to the event. An inspection will be required prior to operation.
2. Additional permits may be required from local Planning and/or Building Departments. Those agencies should be contacted directly.

E. Permit Submittal Information

The permit application submittal shall include the following:

1. A dimensioned site plan that shows:
 - a. The proximity of the event building(s) to other structures or hazardous areas.

- b. The path of travel from the event building or area to the public way.
 - c. The location of exterior evacuation assembly points (if required).
2. A floor plan showing the following:
- a. Dimensions of the area being used (include total square footage, width of exits, aisles or interior exit pathways, etc.)
 - b. The path of travel participants will take. Include the layout of any mazes, mirrors or other display items that may confuse the egress path.
 - c. A brief description of what will be depicted in each room or area along the walk or course including what type of special effects will be utilized.
 - d. Location of exits, exit signs, and emergency lighting.
 - e. Location of electrical panel(s) and light switches.
 - f. Identification of what the normal or prior use of the structure(s) being used is (i.e.: auditorium, school, church, etc.).
 - g. Accessible egress routes.
 - h. Areas of refuge (if any).
 - i. Fire alarm panel location (if any).
 - j. Manual fire alarm pull station and horn/strobe locations (if any)
 - k. Portable fire extinguisher locations.
3. A fire safety and evacuation plan that includes the following:
- a. Procedures for reporting a fire or other emergency.
 - b. Procedures for accounting for occupants and staff after evacuation has been completed.
 - c. Identification and assignment of personnel responsible for rescue or emergency medical aid.
 - d. The means of notifying occupants (both patrons and event personnel) of a fire or emergency.
 - e. Identification and assignment of personnel in charge that can be contacted for further information.
 - f. A description of the emergency alarm, voice/alarm, alert tone or preprogrammed voice messages.
 - g. A description of all staff positions and their duties.
 - h. A statement that all personnel will carry flashlights and know the location of all exits, fire extinguishers, light switches, electrical panels, and emergency phones. Additionally, that personnel will be trained on fire safe practices and fire evacuation.
 - i. A statement that personnel will be designated to turn off all distracting noises (i.e.: sound system) and turn on lights when alerted by either fire alarm or otherwise notified of an emergency condition.

F. Occupant Load and Staffing Requirements

1. Maximum occupant load (which shall include event personnel) shall be determined during plan review. A sign stating maximum occupant capacity shall be posted in a visible location near the entrance, and personnel shall control the flow of patrons so as not to exceed this limit.
2. The event shall be adequately staffed to control the occupant load and assist patrons in exiting should an evacuation become necessary. Staffing level shall be determined upon review of plans and may be increased at the discretion of the Fire Department.

G. Exits

1. Two exits shall be provided from each room with an occupant load of 50 or more. Required exit doors shall swing in the direction of egress.
2. Illuminated exit signs shall be provided at each exit serving an occupant load of 50 or more.
3. Exit doors serving an occupant load of 50 or more shall not be provided with a latch or lock unless it is panic hardware.
4. When tents or membrane structures are approved for use, curtains shall not be allowed to cover the exits.
5. Emergency lighting shall be provided in exit pathways.
6. Exhibits and decorative materials shall not obstruct, confuse, or obscure exits, exit pathways, exit signs, or emergency lights.
7. Additional exit pathway markings, including low level exit signs and directional exit path markings installed in accordance with the Building Code, may be required at time of field inspection.

H. Fire Protection

1. An automatic fire sprinkler system shall be provided. *[Exception: Not required when total floor area is less than 1,000 square feet and travel distance to an exit is less than 50 feet.]*
2. Provide an approved automatic fire detection system in accordance with the California Building Code as required for amusement buildings.
3. Actuation of a single smoke detector, the fire sprinkler system or other automatic fire detection device shall immediately sound an alarm at the structure in a constantly attended location.
4. Provide an emergency voice/alarm communication system in accordance with the California Building Code as required for amusement buildings.
5. Fire Extinguishers shall be provided as follows:
 - a. A minimum 2A10BC rated.
 - b. Properly mounted (top of unit between 3 and 5 feet from floor).
 - c. Visible and accessible at all times and clearly illuminated or marked with reflective tape.
 - d. Located within 50 feet travel distance from anywhere in the building.
6. Decorative materials shall not obstruct fire sprinklers, fire extinguishers, or any other Fire Department equipment.

I. Electrical

1. Extension cords shall be a heavy commercial type. UL listed, in good condition, and shall be appropriate for the intended use.
2. Only UL listed power strips with over-current protection shall be used when the number of outlets provided is inadequate. Power strips shall be plugged directly into the outlet, and shall not be plugged into one another in series.
3. For string lighting, the manufacturer's installation guidelines shall be followed for the maximum number of string lights that can be connected. When connecting string lights together, the total amperage of all the light strings shall be calculated to ensure they do not exceed the amperage for the extension cord and circuit.
4. All extension cords and power strips shall be adequately protected from foot traffic ("Bridged") if paths of travel cannot be avoided.
5. An electrical permit may be required. See your local Building Department for requirements.
6. Portable generators shall be diesel. When portable generators are utilized, they shall be located a minimum of 20 feet away from all structures. The plan submittal shall show the location and fuel capacity of all generators

J. Decorative Materials

1. All decorative materials shall be either inherently flame retardant and labeled as such, or shall be treated with a flame retardant that is registered with the California State Fire Marshal. If the material is treated by the user, a container and receipt will serve as proof.
2. Interior wall, ceiling and floor finishes shall be Class A rated in accordance with the Building Code.
3. A Flame test may be required. The flame test shall consist of putting a flame to a sample of the materials by match or lighter. The test shall be conducted in the presence of the Fire Code Official. It shall be done outside the structure, on a specimen of the materials approximately 3 inches wide by 10 inches long and orientated by a 45-degree angle from horizontal. When testing, the flame shall be put to the bottom edge of the material for a period of up to 12 seconds. If the material fails to ignite, or it ignites and the flame self-extinguishes when the flame source is removed from the sample, the material is considered to be flame retardant.
4. Care and consideration shall be used with respect to smoke generator and smoke alarm locations. Use of smoke generator may be restricted if determined to be incompatible with smoke alarm(s).

K. Inspections

1. A fire safety inspection shall be conducted by the Fire Department at least one day prior to the start of operation.
2. A fire drill demonstrating the implementation of the fire evacuation plan may be required at the time of inspection.

L. Miscellaneous

1. “NO SMOKING” signs shall be provided at main entrance and throughout exhibit.
2. Storage or use of flammable or combustible liquids, gases, and solids is prohibited.
3. Open flame is prohibited.
4. Good housekeeping shall be maintained throughout exhibit and exit pathways at all times.