



FIRE DEPARTMENT

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INFORMATION BULLETIN

HAUNTED HOUSES (Special Amusement Building)

Code Reference:

2010 California Building Code, Chapters 4 and 10

2010 California Fire Code, Articles 10 and 25

California Code of Regulations, Title 19

SCOPE:

These regulations shall apply to temporary Haunted Houses, Ghost Walks, or similar operations, open to the public, where combustible decorative material and confusing sounds and/or visual effects are present.

DEFINITIONS:

For the purposes of this standard, certain terms and words are defined as follows:

- A. *Special Amusement Building:*** A building that is temporary, permanent or mobile that contains a device or system that conveys passengers or provides a walkway along, around or over a course in any direction as a form of amusement arranged so that the egress path is not readily apparent due to visual or audio distractions or an intentionally confounded egress path, or it not readily available because of the mode of conveyance through the building or structure.

ASSEMBLY PERMITS:

1. A plot plan and information shall be submitted to the local fire authority a minimum of two (2) weeks prior to the event. An inspection shall be conducted for final approval.
2. A permit will be required to operate a haunted house. Contact the Fire Department for permit.

3. Permit application packet should include the following:
 - A. Dimensional **site plan** shall indicate proximity of event building to other structures or hazardous areas, and path of travel from event building or area to the public way.
 - B. Floor plan showing the following:
 1. Dimensions (total square footage, width of exits, aisles or interior exit pathways, etc.)
 2. Location of exits, exit signs, and emergency lighting units
 3. Location of fire extinguishers
 4. Location of electrical panel(s) and light switches
 5. Location of smoke detectors and/or fire alarm panel
 6. Normal use of any structure(s) (i.e.: auditorium, school, church, etc.)
 7. Staff positions - Supervision is required.
 - C. Written emergency procedure (see "Emergency Planning" section below).

REQUIREMENT:

1. Emergency Planning:
 - A. Maximum occupant load (which shall include staff) shall be determined by the Fire Department during review. A sign stating maximum occupant capacity shall be posted in a visible location near the entrance, and a staff member shall control the flow of patrons so as not to exceed this limit.
 - B. A written emergency procedure plan shall be provided with permit application packet. All staff members shall be trained in emergency procedures.
 - C. Emergency procedure plan shall include training of staff and familiarization with fire alarm tone. Specific personnel shall be designated to turn off all distracting noises (i.e.: sound system) and turn on lights when alerted by either fire alarm system or other approved alerting system notifying of an

emergency condition.

- D. This 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 inspector.
- E. All emergency staff shall carry flashlights and know the location of all exits, fire extinguishers, light switches, electrical panels, and emergency phones.
- F. A fire drill may be required.
- G. Phone communication shall be readily available for the purpose of calling 911 in the event of an emergency.

2. Exits:

- A. A minimum of two (2) exits shall be provided from each room with an occupant load of 50 or more. Required exits doors shall swing in the direction of egress.
- B. Illuminated exit signs, with battery back-up, shall be provided at each exit serving an occupant load of 50 or more. Non-illuminated exit signs shall be provided for all exits serving an occupant load less than 50.
- C. Exit doors shall not be provided with a latch or lock, unless it is panic hardware.
- D. Emergency lighting, with battery back-up, shall be provided in all rooms, areas and exit pathways when serving an occupant load of 50 or more.
- E. Exhibits and decorative materials shall not obstruct, confuse, or obscure exits, exit pathways, exit signs, or emergency lighting units.
- F. Additional pathway marking, including low level marking and signs, may be required at time of field inspection.

3. Fire Protection:

- A. Provide an approved automatic fire sprinkler system.

Exception: When the total floor area is less than 1,000 square feet, and the travel distance to an exit is less than 50 feet.

- B. Provide an approved automatic smoke detection system in accordance with California Building Code, as required for amusement buildings.

Exception: In areas where ambient conditions will cause a smoke detector system to alarm, an approved alternate type of automatic detector shall be installed.

Exception: Single station smoke detectors may be used for a temporary haunted house set-up.

- C. When the occupant load is over 1,000, provide a public address system in accordance with the California Building Code, as required for amusement buildings.

Exception: When the occupant load is less than 1,000 people, manually activated device(s) suitable for sounding an alarm, or other approved method of alerting staff, shall be provided as approved by the Fire Department. The alarm shall be distinctive in tone and audible throughout the haunted house/area.

- D. Fire extinguishers shall be:

1. Minimum 2-A 10:BC rated.
2. Properly mounted (top of fire extinguisher 4 feet from the floor).
3. Visible and accessible at all times, and clearly illuminated or marked with reflective tape.
4. Located within 50 feet travel distance from anywhere in the building.

4. Electrical:

- B. Extension cords shall be of heavy commercial type, 14-gauge minimum, U.L.

listed, in good condition, and **shall be** appropriate for its use.

- C. 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 provided outlets, and shall not be plugged into one another in series.
- D. All extension cords and power strips shall be adequately protected from foot traffic; "bridged" if paths of travel cannot be avoided.
- E. An electrical permit will be required from the Building Department, should temporary wiring and receptacles be added.
- F. Flood and strobe lights shall be plugged directly into a wall outlet, listed multi-plug power strip, or single listed extension cord. For string lighting, reference the manufacturer's installation guidelines for the maximum number of string lights that may be connected. When plugging the string lights together, the total amperage of all the light strings shall be calculated to ensure they do not exceed the amperage of the extension cord and circuit.

5. Decorative Materials:

- A. All decorative materials (decorations, drapes, backdrops and props) 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. Any material not appropriately labeled as fire retardant shall be flame tested.

NOTE: The flame test shall consist of putting a flame to a sample of the material by a match or lighter. The test shall be conducted outside the building on a specimen of the material approximately 3 inches wide by 10 inches long, and oriented at a 45-degree angle. When testing, the flame shall be applied at the bottom edge of the material for a period of up to 12 seconds. If the material fails to ignite, or if it ignites and self-extinguishes when the flame source is removed, the material will be considered flame retardant.

6. Miscellaneous:

- A. Care and consideration shall be used with respect to smoke generator and smoke detector locations. Use of a smoke generator may be restricted if determined to be incompatible with smoke detector(s).

- B. "NO SMOKING" signs shall be provided at the entrance and throughout the exhibit.
- C. Storage or use of flammable or combustible liquids, gasses and solids is prohibited.
- D. Open candles and other flame devices are prohibited.
- E. Good housekeeping shall be maintained throughout the exhibit and exit pathways.