

Haunted Houses at USC

PURPOSE

This guideline is intended to provide safety standards and regulations for the construction and operation of structures used as haunted houses.

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. The requirements listed in this guideline were obtained from the requirements of the 2001 California Building Code (CBC), 2001 California Fire Code (CFC), and California Code of Regulations, Title 19.

DEFINITIONS

Amusement Building: Any building or portion thereof, temporary or permanent, used for entertainment or educational purposes which contains a system that transports passengers or provides a walkway through a course so arranged that the required means of egress, due to theatrical distractions, disguise or visual obstructions, is not apparent.

Haunted House: A temporary structure, or portion of a building, which contains a system that transports passengers or provides a walkway through a course so arranged that the means of egress, due to theatrical distractions, low illumination, disguise or visual obstructions, is not apparent. Creation of the haunted house shall not cause the alteration, modification, destruction or any other change to a buildings structural, electrical, mechanical or plumbing systems.

PROCEDURE

Please contact Jeff Pendley at 213-281-0963.

Please submit the following to Jeff:

- A dimensional site/floor plan indicating the proximity of the event building to other structures or hazardous areas and paths of travel from the event building or area to the public way.
- Dimensions indicating total square footage of the structure; width of all exits; aisles and interior exit pathways.
- Locations of all exits, illuminated exit signs, and all emergency lighting units.
- Location of all fire extinguishers.

- Location of all electric panels and light switches.
- Location of all smoke detectors and/or fire alarm panels.
- Location of all staff positions at the event.

Requirements

A written Emergency Plan shall be submitted and shall include the following:

- The maximum occupancy load (including all staff). Fire Prevention staff will assist you in determining the correct occupancy load. A sign stating the maximum occupant capacity shall be posted in a visible location near the entrance and event staff shall control the flow of patrons so as not to exceed the maximum occupancy limit.
- A written emergency procedure plan shall be submitted along with the permit application packet. All employees shall be trained in emergency evacuation procedures. The emergency procedures plan shall include training of staff members and familiarization with the fire alarm signal. Specific personnel shall be designated to turn off all distracting noises (i.e., the sound system) and turn on all lights when alerted by either the fire alarm system or otherwise notified of an emergency condition.
- Two (2) exits shall be provided from each room with an occupant load of fifty (50) or more. Required exit doors shall swing in the direction of egress travel.
- Illuminated exit signs, with battery back-up, shall be provided at each exit.
- Maximum travel distance to the nearest exit shall not exceed 200 feet in a nonsprinklered structure and 250 feet in a sprinklered structure.
- Exit doors serving an occupancy load of fifty (50) or more shall have panic hardware.
- Emergency lighting, with battery back-up, shall be provided in all rooms, areas, and exit pathways.
- Exhibit and decorative materials shall not obstruct, confuse, or obscure exits, exit pathways, exit signs, or emergency lighting units.

Note: Additional pathway marking, including low-level markings and signs may be required.

Fire Protection:

- Automatic fire sprinkler systems, when provided, shall not be obstructed or altered.
- Automatic smoke detection system is required and shall not be obstructed or altered.
- Upon activation of the smoke detection or fire sprinkler systems, all confusing sounds and visual effects shall stop; activate approved directional exit markings; and cause illumination of the means of egress with light of not less than one (1) footcandle at the walking surface.
- A public address system that is audible throughout the amusement structure shall be provided.
- All fire extinguishers shall have a minimum rating of 3A:40BC, and be properly

mounted between three (3) and five (5) feet from the floor to the top of the extinguisher. All extinguishers must be visible and accessible at all times and clearly illuminated or marked with reflective tape. Extinguishers must be located within seventy-five (75) feet travel distance from any point in the structure.

Electrical:

- All extension cords shall be a heavy commercial type, UL Listed, not subject to mechanical damage, in good condition, and appropriate for their use.
- 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 other power strips. All extension cords and power strips shall be protected from foot traffic.

Decorative Material:

- All decorative materials (decorations, drapes, backdrops, and props) shall be both inherently flame retardant and labeled as such or shall be treated with a flame retardant that is registered with the California State Fire Marshal. A certificate of flame retardance shall be submitted to the Fire Prevention Division for all decorative materials.
- Any material not appropriately labeled as fire retardant shall be flame tested and will be required to be removed if it is combustible.

Miscellaneous:

- Use of smoke generators may be restricted if they are determined to be incompatible with smoke detectors.
- “NO SMOKING” signs shall be provided at the entrance to the exhibit.
- Storage and /or use of flammable or combustible liquids, gasses and solids are prohibited.
- Open flames and open flame devices are prohibited.
- Good housekeeping shall be maintained throughout the exhibit and in all exit pathways.
- All emergency staff shall carry flashlights and know the location of all exits, fire extinguishers, light switches, electrical panels, and emergency phones.
- Phone communication shall be readily available for the purpose of calling 911 in the event of an emergency.
- A fire drill involving all staff members may be required prior to event opening.