

CITY OF FOUNTAIN VALLEY FIRE DEPARTMENT FIRE PREVENTION

Temporary Haunted Houses Guidelines



Fire Prevention

(714) 593-4542

Temporary Haunted Houses Guidelines

PURPOSE

This guide is intended to provide fire safety standards and regulations for the construction and operation of temporary haunted attractions/events that are open to the public.

SCOPE

These regulations shall apply to temporary Haunted Houses, Ghost Walks, and similar entertainment venues where combustible decorative material and confusing audio and/or visual effects are present. The requirements listed in this guideline were derived from the California Building Code (CBC), the California Fire Code (CFC), and the California Code of Regulations, Title 19.

DEFINITIONS

Haunted House – A structure, or portion thereof, which transports people through a course where the means of egress are not apparent due to theatrical distractions, low illumination, temporary hallways, partitions, and/or multiple rooms.

Ghost Walk – Similar to haunted houses and may include both indoor and outdoor areas where the means of egress to the public way are not apparent due to theatrical distractions and/or low illumination.

OPERATIONAL PERMIT REQUIREMENTS

Fire Prevention shall review site and floor plans and perform Fire Safety Inspections before permits are issued.

1. Provide a written emergency procedure (see below General Fire Safety Requirements #2).
2. Obtain partner agency approvals such as Planning, Building, Law Enforcement, City Zoning, and Health Departments as needed.
3. All additional documents (permit application form, site plan, and letter of intent) submitted to the City

FIRE SAFETY INSPECTION

Owner/operator shall schedule and allow a minimum of 10 business days for an FVFD inspection after all required paperwork and approvals are received from the Building and Fire Departments.

A Fire Safety Inspection is required prior to occupancy.

1. Permits shall be secured from the building department as required for any structural, electrical modifications, and window or door replacements.
2. Final building department inspection and sign-off shall be made prior to FVFD inspection.
3. Contact the planning department for zoning information. Clearance from the FVFD **does not** constitute zoning clearances.

SITE PLAN

Plans shall be submitted a minimum of 20 business days before occupancy to ensure adequate time to review plans, perform field inspections, and process permits. Plans shall be accurately scaled or dimensioned diagrams demonstrating compliance with all codes and regulations.

Provide 2 copies of the site plan on 8 ½" by 11" paper. The plan shall include the following:

1. Indicate the proximity of the event structure to other buildings, fences, or property lines
2. Emergency access roads
3. Fire hydrants
4. Paths of travel from the amusement structure or area to the public way

FLOOR PLAN

Plans shall be submitted a minimum of 20 business days before occupancy to ensure adequate time to review plans, perform field inspections, and process permits. Plans shall be accurately scaled or dimensioned diagrams demonstrating compliance with all codes and regulations.

Provide 2 copies of the site plan on 8 ½" by 11" paper. The plan shall include the following:

1. Dimensions (total square footage, width/type of exits, aisles, or interior exit pathways)
2. Locations 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 the fire alarm panel
6. Normal use of any structure(s) (i.e., warehouse, auditorium, school, church, etc.)
7. Staff and performer positions
8. Queue line design and location
9. Temporary structures, large props, and facades
10. Attraction layout, the path of show

FIRE & LIFE SAFETY SYSTEMS

1. Approved automatic fire sprinkler systems/piping, when provided, shall not be obstructed, altered, or used to support any decorations.

2. Approved automatic smoke detection systems, when provided, shall not be obstructed, altered, or turned off.
3. Provide a public address system per the CBC as required for amusement buildings.

Exception: When the total floor area is less than 1000 square feet and the travel distance to an exit is less than 50 feet, manually activated devices suitable for sounding an alarm or another approved method of alerting staff, shall be provided as approved by the FVFD. The alarm shall be distinctive in tone and be audible throughout the haunted house/area.

4. Fire extinguishers shall be a minimum of a (2A 10BC) rating and properly mounted 5 feet from the floor to the top of the extinguisher. They must be visible and accessible at all times. Travel distance to an extinguisher shall not exceed 75 feet.
5. Decorative material shall not obstruct fire sprinklers, extinguishers, fire alarm “pull stations,” fire alarm horns/strobes, or any other fire protection equipment inside or outside of the building.

GENERAL FIRE SAFETY REQUIREMENTS

Decorative Materials

1. All decorative materials (decorations, drapes, backdrops, and props) shall be inherently flame retardant and labeled as such, or treated with a flame retardant registered with the California State Fire Marshal. Any material not appropriately labeled or certified as fire retardant shall be flame tested and approved by FVFD.

Electrical Hazards

1. Extension cords shall be UL listed, in good condition, and appropriate for their 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 provided outlets and shall not be plugged into one another in series.
3. All extension cords and power strips shall be adequately protected from foot traffic (i.e., bridged) if paths of travel cannot be avoided.
4. An electrical permit may be required. Contact your local building department for requirements.

5. Flood and strobe lights shall be plugged directly into a wall outlet, a listed multi-plug power strip, or a single listed extension cord. For string lighting, refer to 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 for the extension cord and circuit.
6. Generators shall be outside and at least 20 feet away from any structures. Generators cannot interrupt the means of egress.

Miscellaneous

1. The maximum occupant load (including all staff and performers) shall be determined during the plan review. A sign stating the maximum occupant capacity shall be posted in a visible location near the entrance and staff shall control the flow of patrons so as not to exceed this limit.
2. A written emergency procedure plan shall be provided with the permit application packet. All employees shall be trained in emergency procedures.
3. The emergency procedure plan shall include training of staff and familiarization with the fire alarm tone. Specific personnel shall be designated to turn off all distracting noises (i.e., the sound system) and turn on lights when alerted by either the fire alarm system or otherwise notified of an emergency condition.
4. The event shall be adequately staffed to control the occupant load and assist patrons in exiting should an evacuation become necessary. An appropriate staffing level shall be determined upon review of plans and may be increased at the discretion of the inspector.
5. All emergency staff shall carry flashlights and know the location of all exits, fire extinguishers, light switches, electrical panels, and emergency phones.
6. A fire drill may be required.
7. Phone communication shall be readily available for the purpose of calling 911 in the event of an emergency.
8. Specialized conditions and additional exiting shall be required for structures that are not approved as an assembly.

9. Care and consideration shall be used concerning smoke generators and smoke detector locations. The use of smoke generators may be restricted if they are determined to be incompatible with smoke detectors.
10. "NO SMOKING" signs shall be provided at the entrance and throughout the attraction.
11. Storage and/or use of flammable or combustible liquids, gasses, and solids are prohibited.
12. Open flame is prohibited.
13. Good housekeeping shall be maintained throughout the attraction and exit pathways.
14. Provide signage at the ticket office and/or entrance of the attraction notifying the public if strobe lights and theatrical smoke effects are used.