

SAFETY REQUIREMENTS FOR HAUNTED HOUSES

Purpose

This guide is intended to provide safety standards and regulations for the construction and operation of temporary structures; indoors or outdoors.

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 derived from the requirements of the ICC/IFC 2018 (International Fire Code) and the ICC/IBC 2018 Section 411 (International Building Code).

Definition

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 is not readily available because of the mode of conveyance through the building or structure. The requirements to be followed are found in IBC 2018 Sec.411.

Submittal Requirements

1. PERMITS

A. A minimum of four weeks prior to the event, a Special Event application (Use the Special Event Permit application form, available from the Twp. website) shall be submitted to Doylestown Township.

A separate narrative will be required to address fully the requirements found in this guideline, include it with your permit application. An inspection shall be required for final approval.

B. Additional permits may be required, for example an electrical permit if any temporary wiring will be installed for the event.

C. Permit application packet should include the following:

1. Dates and times that the event is open to the public
2. A dimensional site plan shall indicate the proximity of the event building or exterior event area to other structures or hazardous areas and paths of travel to the public way.
3. A floor plan showing the following:
 - a. Dimensions (total square footage, width of exits, aisles, or interior exit pathways, etc.)
 - b. Locations of exits, exit signs, and emergency lighting units.
 - c. Location of fire extinguishers.
 - d. Location of electrical panel(s) and light switches.
 - e. Location of smoke detectors and/or the fire alarm panel.
 - f. Indicate normal use of any structure(s), i.e., auditorium, school, church, field, parking lot etc.
 - g. Staff positions
 - h. Handicap accessible route through the exhibit must be indicated.
 - i. Location of ticket sales, indicating handicap accessible counter if counters are provided.
4. A written emergency procedure (see Section 2.A below).

2. REQUIREMENTS

A. Emergency Planning

1. The maximum occupant load (including all staff) shall be determined during 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 possess a copy of the procedure, be trained in its implementation, and be carrying a cell phone or communication device for constant contact with the event director.
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. This 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 Fire Marshal.
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.

B. 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 travel.
2. Illuminated exit signs with battery back-up shall be provided at each exit. Non-illuminated photo luminescent (glow in the dark) exit signs are permitted in compliance with the IBC requirements.
3. Exit doors serving an occupant load of 50 or more shall be provided with panic hardware.

4. Emergency lighting with battery back-up shall be provided in all rooms, areas, and exit pathways.
5. Exhibit and decorative materials shall not obstruct, confuse, or obscure exits, exit pathways, exit signs, or emergency lighting units.
6. Directional exit signs (glow in the dark) are to be provided in any “maze” type area to indicate a way out at any time.

C. Fire Protection

1. Approved automatic fire sprinkler systems, when provided, shall not be obstructed nor altered. No items or space dividers to hang within 18 inches of ceiling in sprinklered spaces.
2. Approved automatic smoke detection systems, when provided, shall not be obstructed nor altered and shall be in accordance with the IBC as required for amusement buildings.
3. Provide a public address system in accordance with the IBC Section 411.5, as required for amusement buildings. Background audio/special effect sounds will cease during public announcements.
4. Fire extinguishers shall be a minimum of 2A:10BC rated and be properly mounted, maximum 48” to top of handle from the floor to the top of the extinguisher. They must be visible and accessible at all times and clearly illuminated or marked with reflective tape. Extinguishers must be located within a 75-foot travel distance from any point in the building, and at each exit.
5. Decorative material shall not obstruct fire sprinklers, fire extinguishers, or any other fire protection equipment.
6. Heat producing appliances, fog machines and flood lights are not to be close to, or covered by, combustibles materials or be placed on combustible flooring without protection.

D. Electrical

1. Extension cords shall be a heavy commercial type, 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, or securely taped) if paths of travel cannot be avoided.
4. An electrical permit and 3rd party electrical underwriter inspection may be required.
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.

E. Decorative Materials

1. All decorative materials (decorations, drapes, backdrops and props) shall either be inherently flame retardant and labeled as such or shall be treated with a flame retardant. Any material not appropriately labeled as fire retardant shall be flame tested. A certificate of fireproofing to be handed to the Fire Marshal.

F. Miscellaneous

1. Care and consideration shall be used with respect to smoke generators and smoke detector locations. Use of smoke generators may be restricted if they are determined to be incompatible with smoke detectors.
2. "NO SMOKING" signs shall be provided at the entrance and throughout the exhibit.
3. Storage and/or use of flammable or combustible liquids, gasses and solids are prohibited.
4. Open flame is prohibited.
5. Good housekeeping shall be maintained throughout the exhibit and exit pathways.
6. Recycling and trash containers to be provided.
7. If food vendors will be present, Bucks County Health Dept. permits will be required. Provide copies of the permits to the Twp. or confirmation from the Health Dept. that permits are not needed.