



# city of san luis obispo

FIRE DEPARTMENT  
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*“Courtesy & Service”*



## Haunted Houses

### Scope

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

### Definitions

**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 to the method of transportation through the building or structure.

**Ghost Walks:** Similar to Haunted House and may include both indoor and outdoor areas where egress to a public way is similarly not readily identifiable.

### References

2007 California Building Code, 2007 California Fire Code, and California Code of Regulations, Title 19.

### Permits

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

### Permit application packet should include the following:

1. A dimensioned site plan shall indicate proximity of the event building(s) to other structures or hazardous areas, and path of travel from event building or area to the public way.
2. A floor plan showing the following:
  - A. Dimensions (total square footage, width of exits, aisles or interior exit pathways, etc.)
  - B. Location 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 alarms and/or fire alarm panel
  - F. Normal use of any structure(s) (i.e.: auditorium, school, church, etc.)
  - G. Staff positions.

A written emergency procedure (see ["Emergency Planning"](#) section below).

### Requirements

#### 1. **Emergency Planning:**

A. Maximum occupant load (which shall include staff) shall be determined during plan review. A sign stating 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.



- B. A written emergency procedure plan shall be provided with permit application packet. All employees shall be trained in emergency procedures.
- C. The 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 or otherwise notified of an emergency condition.
- D. 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 Marshal.
- E. All employees shall carry flashlights and know the location of all exits, fire extinguishers, light switches, electrical panels, and emergency phones.
- F. A fire drill demonstrating the implementation of the emergency plan may be required at the time of inspection.
- G. Phone communication shall be readily available for the purpose of calling 911 in the event of an emergency.

**2. Exits:**

- A. 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.
- B. Illuminated exit signs shall be provided at each exit serving an occupant load of 50 or more.
- C. Exit doors serving an occupant load of 50 or more shall not be provided with a latch or lock unless it is panic hardware.
- D. Emergency lighting shall be provided in exit pathways.
- E. Exhibits and decorative materials shall not obstruct, confuse, or obscure exits, exit pathways, exit signs, or emergency lighting units.
- F. Additional pathway markings, including low level marking and signs, may be required at time of field inspection.

**3. Fire Protection:**

- A. An automatic fire sprinkler system shall be provided.  
**Exception:** When the total floor area is less than 1000 square feet and travel distance to an exit is less than 50 feet.
- B. Provide an approved automatic smoke detection and alarm system in accordance with the California Building Code 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 device(s) suitable for sounding an alarm shall be provided as approved by the Fire Department. The alarm shall be distinctive in tone and audible throughout the haunted house area.
- C. Fire extinguishers shall be:
  1. minimum 2A10BC rated.
  2. properly mounted (top of unit between 3 and 5 feet from 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.
- D. Decorative materials shall not obstruct fire sprinklers, fire extinguishers, or any other fire protection equipment.

**4. Electrical:**

- A. Extension cords shall be of heavy commercial type, UL listed, in good condition, and shall be appropriate for the intended use.



- B. 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.
- C. All extension cords and power strips shall be adequately protected from foot traffic ("Bridged") if paths of travel cannot be avoided.
- D. An electrical permit may be required. See your local Building Department for requirements.

**5. Decorative Materials:**

- A. 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.
- B. If material is treated by the user, a container and receipt will serve as proof. NOTE: A Flame test may be required.
- C. 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).

**6. Miscellaneous:**

- A. "NO SMOKING" signs shall be provided at main entrance and throughout exhibit.
- B. Storage or use of flammable or combustible liquids, gasses and solids is prohibited.
- C. Open flame is prohibited.
- D. Good housekeeping shall be maintained throughout exhibit and exit pathways at all times.

