

Haunted House Requirements

It is the intention of the San Angelo Fire Prevention Office to allow its citizens to enjoy holiday events in a safe manner. Prior to utilizing any structure for the purposes of a special amusement building, the owner/operator should contact the San Angelo Permits Office at 325-657-4210 and make sure that the building can be permitted and is properly zoned for the use of a special amusement building (Haunted House). A temporary certificate of occupancy (TCO) may be issued by the Permits Office. However, all requirements in the fire code must be met. Once allowed, the largest issue that comes up when performing inspections on special amusement buildings, such as haunted houses, is that they most often require fire protection systems. Some of the main issues encountered in these occupancies include a lack of fire alarm notification, sprinkler systems, and exit signs.

Common Requirements

1. **Large buildings used as haunted houses are required to have a fire sprinkler system installed and inspected.** Buildings over 1,000 square feet need to have a valid, in service sprinkler protection system that has been tested and inspected by a licensed fire sprinkler company.

Remedy: Ensure accurate square footage, and if necessary, ensure sprinkler system is currently inspected and operational.

Code Reference: Special amusement buildings shall be equipped throughout with an *automatic sprinkler system* in accordance with Section 903.3.1.1.

Exception: Automatic Sprinklers are not required where the total floor area of a temporary special amusement building is less than 1,000 square feet (93 m²) and the *exit access* travel distance from any point to an *exit* is less than 50 feet (15 240m). *International Fire Code 2015, Section 914.7.1*

2. **Fire sprinklers system should be connected to a fire alarm system to alert building occupants.**

Remedy: Have a licensed fire protection technician connect the sprinkler system to a fire alarm system which provided occupant notification.

Code Reference: Activation of any single smoke detector, the *automatic sprinkler system* or any other automatic fire detection device shall immediately activate an audible and visible alarm at the building at a constantly attended location from which emergency action can be initiated, including the capability of manual initiation. *International Fire Code 2015, Section 907.2.12.1*

3. **Buildings used as haunted houses need to have smoke and/or heat detectors to notify occupants of fire** - Special amusement buildings shall be equipped with an automatic fire detection system to alert occupants of smoke or fire.

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Remedy: Ensure that a smoke detection system is installed and functional.

Code Reference: Special amusement buildings shall be equipped with an automatic smoke detection system. *International Fire Code 2015, Section 914.7.2*

4. Exit widths should accommodate the rapid evacuation of all occupants and shall be appropriately illuminated.

Remedy: Ensure all exits are the required minimum width and properly labeled by a powered exit sign that contains a battery backup or secondary power source.

Code Reference: Exits shall be a minimum of 32 inches clear width when open (ADA requirements apply.) Each exit shall have exit signage as per local fire code official's requirements. Blocking, locking or in any way impeding ready access to any marked or required exit is prohibited. All exit ways shall be kept clear of any obstructions or storage. Illumination shall be provided in the *means of egress* under emergency power. Exits and exit access doors shall be marked by an *approved* exit sign readily visible from any direction of egress travel. *International Fire Code 2015, Section's 1008.1, 1008.3, 1010.1.1 and 1013.1*

5. Smoking is prohibited inside any amusement occupancy. Smoking in or near special amusement buildings could result in fires due to improperly discarded smoking materials.

Remedy: Post "no smoking within 15 feet" signs in conspicuous locations around the structure.

Code Reference: Smoking is prohibited within a reasonable distance of 15 feet outside entrances and windows of an enclosed area. Smoking shall be prohibited where conditions are such as to make smoking a hazard. *City of San Angelo Code of Ordinances, Section 7.05.007 and International Fire 2015, Code Section 310.2*

6. The use of open flames, such as candles and sterno devices, are prohibited. Unapproved temporary heaters are not allowed. Open flames located within special amusement buildings could lead to fires due to accidental contact with flame.

Remedy: Use devices that are battery operated and UL listed instead of candles or other open flame devices to reduce the risk of accidental fire.

Code Reference: Open-flame devices shall not be used in Group A occupancies. *International Fire Code 2015, Section 308.3*

7. The use of untreated combustible material is prohibited. All combustible material shall be treated or protected. Items used for decorations should be treated with flame resistant products to reduce the risk of rapid flame spread in the event of a fire. Items that should not be used are things like dry hay bales, butcher type paper, etc.

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Remedy: Ensure decorations are fire resistive to ensure slow spread of potential fire.

Code Reference: The provisions of this section shall limit the allowable fire performance and smoke development of interior wall and ceiling finishes and interior wall and ceiling trim in existing buildings based on location and occupancy classification. Interior wall and ceiling finishes shall be classified in accordance with Section 803 of the *International Building Code. International Fire Code 2015, Section 803.1*

8. **Fire extinguishers should be appropriately spaced and available for use in the event of an emergency.**

Remedy: Ensure adequate number of appropriately sized extinguishers are installed and accessible for immediate use by occupants.

Code Reference: Sufficient numbers of fire extinguishers shall be provided to ensure that the maximum travel distance to any extinguisher does not exceed 50 feet. The minimum acceptable rating (size) is 2A:10B:C. All fire extinguishers shall be mounted in a conspicuous location. Staff shall be instructed in the proper use of the extinguishers. The size and distribution of portable fire extinguishers shall be in accordance with *International Fire Code 2015, Section 906.3, table 906.3(1) and (2), 906.5 and 906.6*

9. **All electrical installations shall meet the requirements of the NFPA 70-National Electrical Code.**

Remedy: Have a licensed electrician complete all electrical related work.

Code Reference: International Fire Code 2015, Section 102.7

Further considerations

- In any facility using the maze concept there shall be no dead-end aisles/corridors. All aisles/corridors shall be a minimum of 4 feet wide and 6 feet, 8 inches high. All stairways shall be illuminated at a level of at least 1 foot-candle.
- The fire code official shall be contacted for an inspection and the approval of the evacuation and operational procedures (emergency plan) prior to opening the facility to the public. A floor layout shall be provided to the fire code official at the time of inspection.
- The total number of occupants in the facility at any time shall be limited by the exiting capacity in accordance with the fire code. Groups shall consist of not more than 20 persons. The adult staff person and all performers shall have in his/her possession an operable flashlight and be completely familiar with the facility and the approved emergency plan.

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- All decorative materials (decorations, drapes, backdrops, props, and other temporary wall coverings) shall be either inherently flame-retardant or labeled as such, or shall be treated with a flame-retardant that is approved by the fire code official. Black opaque polyethylene sheeting, sometimes referred to as “haunted house FR black plastic” must be labeled to comply with NFPA 701-04 Test 1 criteria. Any material not appropriately labeled as flame-retardant shall be flame-tested in the presence of the City of San Angelo Fire Inspector. 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 in a draft free and safe location, on a specimen of the material that should be a minimum of ½ inch by 4 inches. When testing, the flame shall be put to the bottom edge of the material for a period of up to 12 seconds. The sample shall be suspended with the long axis vertical with the flame applied to the center of the bottom edge. If the material fails to ignite, or if it ignites and the flame self-extinguishes when the flame source is removed from the sample, the material will be considered satisfactorily flame-retardant.
- When indoors or under a covered tent, general house lighting from the premises’ electrical power supply shall be provided. In addition, egress illumination (emergency lighting) and exit signs shall be provided. Both emergency lighting and exit signs shall be provided with battery back-up.
- Exit signs shall be installed at the required exit or exit access doorways of special amusement buildings. Approved directional exit markings may also be required. Where mirrors, mazes or other designs are utilized that disguise the path of egress travel such that they are not apparent, approved low-level exit signs and directional path markings may be required, and when provided shall be located not more than 8 inches above the walking surface and on or near the path of egress travel.