



SANTA CLARA COUNTY FIRE DEPARTMENT

1315 Dell Avenue, Campbell, CA 95008 | (408) 378-4010 | SCCFD.org

STANDARD DETAILS & SPECIFICATIONS

SUBJECT: Haunted House, Ghost Walks, Grad Nights,
& Similar Special Amusement Buildings

| | |
|---------------|-------------|
| Spec No | SI-4 |
| Review Date | 02.11.25 |
| Revis. Date | 02.11.25 |
| Eff. Date | 08.23.90 |
| Approved By | HRE |
| Page <u>1</u> | of <u>8</u> |

SCOPE

These regulations shall apply to Temporary Haunted Houses, Ghost Walks, Grad Night, Special Amusement Buildings, and similar indoor and/or outdoor attractions where decorative material and confusing sounds and/or visual effects may present a hazard to occupant safety.

AUTHORITY

2022 California Building Code (CBC), 2022 California Fire Code (CFC), and California Code of Regulations, Title 19.

DEFINITIONS

Decorative Materials: All materials used for decorative, acoustical or other effect (such as curtains, draperies, fabrics, streamers, and surface coverings) and all other materials utilized for decorative effect (such as batting, cloth, cotton, hay stalks, straw, vines, leaves, trees, moss and similar items), including foam plastics and other materials containing foam plastics.

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

Ghost Walks: Similar to a Haunted House and may include both indoor and outdoor areas where the means of egress is similarly not readily identifiable.

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



SANTA CLARA COUNTY FIRE DEPARTMENT

1315 Dell Avenue, Campbell, CA 95008 | (408) 378-4010 | SCCFD.org

through the building or structure.

REQUIREMENTS

I. Permits

- A. An operational permit is required to operate a special amusement building. A permit application (Special Event Information Sheet) shall be submitted a minimum of two (2) weeks prior to the event. A fire safety inspection and sign off by Fire Department is required prior to occupancy. When set up is substantially complete contact the Fire Department for an initial inspection to allow for sufficient opportunity to address corrections and perform re-inspections as necessary.
- B. Additional permits may be required from local Planning, Building, Law Enforcement, and/or Health Departments. Those agencies should be contacted directly.

II. Permit Submittal Information

- A. A dimensioned site plan that shows:
 - 1. The proximity of the event building(s) or area to the public way.
 - 2. The path of travel from the event building or area to the public way.
 - 3. The location of exterior evacuation assembly points.
- B. A floor plan showing the following:
 - 1. Dimensions of the area being used (include total square footage, width of exits, aisles or interior exit pathways, etc.).
 - 2. The path of travel participants will take. Include the layout of any mazes, mirrors or other display items that may confuse the egress path.
 - 3. A brief description of what will be depicted in each room or area along the walk or course including what type of special effects will be utilized.
 - 4. Location of exits, exit signs, and emergency lighting.
 - 5. Location of electrical panel(s) and light switches.
 - 6. Identification of what the normal or prior use of the structure(s) being used is (e.g. auditorium, school, church, etc.).
 - 7. Accessible egress routes.



SANTA CLARA COUNTY FIRE DEPARTMENT

1315 Dell Avenue, Campbell, CA 95008 | (408) 378-4010 | SCCFD.org

8. When required by Section 907.2.12 of the CFC, fire alarm panel location, fire extinguisher locations, manual fire alarm pull station and horn/strobe locations.

III. Allowable Structures

- A. Haunted Houses, Ghost Walks, and similar amusement uses shall only be located in structures that comply with the provisions for Special Amusement Buildings in accordance with the CBC.

IV. Tents & Membrane Structures

- A. Tents or membrane structures may be used when in compliance with all applicable requirements of this regulation and when the total floor area is less than 1,000 square feet and the travel distance to an exit from any location is less than 50 feet. Refer to SCCFD Standard Detail & Specification T-1 for Tent & Membrane Structure standard detail & specification.

V. Fire Evacuation & Safety Plans

- A. A written emergency procedure plan shall be provided with the permit application packet.
- B. All employees shall be trained in emergency procedures as prescribed by section 404 of the CFC.
- C. 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.
- D. All emergency staff shall carry flashlights and know the location of all exits, fire extinguishers, light switches, electrical panels, exterior evacuation assembly points, and emergency phones/communication.
- E. Phone communication shall be readily available for the purpose of calling 911 in the event of an emergency.
- F. Specialized conditions and additional exiting shall be required for structures that are not approved as an assembly.
- G. A fire drill may be required by the Fire Department.



SANTA CLARA COUNTY FIRE DEPARTMENT

1315 Dell Avenue, Campbell, CA 95008 | (408) 378-4010 | SCCFD.org

VI. Staffing

- A. The event shall be adequately staffed by qualified person(s) 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 Department.

VII. Occupant Load

- A. The maximum occupant load (including all staff and performers) shall be determined during plan review. Where the number of participants in the attraction is not expressly regulated by the operator (for example, “3 groups of 6 people will be allowed inside at any one time”), the number of occupants shall be computed at the rate of one person per unit of area:
 - 1. Standing space (e.g. queueing, walking/standing, waiting areas) 5 sqft.
 - 2. Concentrated seating (e.g. non-fixed chairs, dance floors) 7sqft.
 - 3. Unconcentrated seating (e.g. tables and chairs) 15 sqft.
- B. 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 not to exceed the posted limit.
- C. 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 Fire Department.

VIII. Exits

- A. Two exits shall be provided from each room with an occupant load of 50 to 499. Provide three exits from each room with an occupant load of 500 to 999. Provide four exits from each room with an occupant load of 1,000 or more.
 - 1. Minimum width of each exit shall be 36”.
 - 2. The main exit must accommodate at least 50% of the occupant load.
 - 3. Required exit doors shall swing in the direction of egress.



SANTA CLARA COUNTY FIRE DEPARTMENT

1315 Dell Avenue, Campbell, CA 95008 | (408) 378-4010 | SCCFD.org

- 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. When tents or membrane structures are approved for use, curtains shall not be allowed to cover the exits.
- E. Emergency lighting shall be provided in exit pathways.
- F. Exhibits and decorative materials shall not obstruct, confuse, or obscure exits, exit pathways, exit signs, or emergency lights.
- G. Additional exit pathway markings, including low level exit signs and directional exit path markings installed in accordance with the CBC, may be required at time of field inspection.

IX. Fire Protection

- A. An approved automatic fire sprinkler system shall be provided. Where the special amusement building is temporary, the sprinkler water supply shall be of an approved temporary means.
 - 1. **Exception 1:** When the total floor area of interior portions of the attraction is less than 1000 square feet and the travel distance to an exit is less than 50 feet or,
 - 2. **Exception 2:** Existing non-sprinklered assembly spaces, such as gymnasiums, when used for assembly purposes such as grad night.
- B. Fire sprinkler systems/piping, when provided, shall not be obstructed, altered, or used to support any decorations.
- C. An approved automatic smoke detection system shall be provided per CFC 907.2.12.
 - 1. **Exception 1:** When the total floor area of interior portions of the attraction is less than 1000 square feet and the travel distance to an exit is less than 50 feet.
 - 2. **Exception 2:** Existing assembly spaces that are not equipped with a smoke detection system when used for assembly purposes such as grad night.
 - a. Activation of any single smoke detector, the automatic sprinkler system or any other automatic fire detection device shall immediately activate an



SANTA CLARA COUNTY FIRE DEPARTMENT

1315 Dell Avenue, Campbell, CA 95008 | (408) 378-4010 | SCCFD.org

audible and visible alarm in the building at a constantly attended location from which emergency action can be initiated, including the capability of manual initiation of requirements.

- b. The activation of two or more smoke detectors, a single smoke detector equipped with an alarm verification feature, the automatic sprinkler system or other approved fire detection devices shall automatically do all the following:
 - i. Cause illumination of the means of egress with light of not less than 1 foot-candle at the walking surface level.
 - ii. Stop any conflicting or confusing sounds and visual distractions.
 - iii. Activate an approved directional exit marking that will become apparent in an emergency.
 - iv. Activate a prerecorded message, audible throughout the special amusement building, instructing patrons to proceed to the nearest exit. Alarm signals used in conjunction with the prerecorded message shall produce a sound that is distinctive from other sounds used during normal operation.
- D. An emergency voice/alarm communication system, which is allowed to serve as a public address system, shall be installed in accordance with Section 907.5.2.2 of the CFC, and be audible throughout the entire special amusement building.
 - 1. **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 Fire Department. The alarm shall be distinctive in tone and be audible throughout the attraction.
- E. Automatic smoke detection systems or devices, when present, shall not be obstructed, altered or turned off.

X. Portable Fire Extinguishers

- A. Provide minimum 2A10BC rated portable fire extinguisher(s).
- B. Ensure they are properly mounted (top of unit between 3 and 5 feet from floor).
- C. Ensure they are visible & accessible at all times and clearly identify locations with signs or reflective tape.
- D. Verify they are located within 50 feet travel distance from anywhere in the building.



SANTA CLARA COUNTY FIRE DEPARTMENT

1315 Dell Avenue, Campbell, CA 95008 | (408) 378-4010 | SCCFD.org

- E. Decorative materials shall not obstruct fire sprinklers, fire extinguishers, or any other Fire Department equipment.

XI. Electrical

- A. Extension cords shall be a 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 the outlet and shall not be plugged into one another in series.
- C. For string lighting, the manufacturer's installation guidelines shall be followed for the maximum number of string lights that can be connected. When connecting 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.
- D. All extension cords and power strips shall be adequately protected from foot traffic ("Bridged") if paths of travel cannot be avoided.
- E. An electrical permit may be required. See your local Building Department for requirements.
- F. Portable generators shall be diesel powered. When portable generators are utilized, they shall be located a minimum of 20 feet away from all structures. The plan submittal shall show the location and fuel capacity of all generators.
Additional permitting may be required by the Fire Department or the Santa Clara County Hazardous Materials Compliance Division (HMCD). HMCD can be reached at (408) 918-3400.

XII. Decorative Materials

- A. All decorative materials (see definition) shall be either inherently flame retardant and labeled as such or shall be treated with a flame retardant that is registered with the California State Fire Marshal. If the material is treated by the user, a container and receipt will serve as proof.
- B. Interior wall, ceiling and floor finishes shall be Class A rated in accordance with the CBC.
- C. A flame test may be required. The flame test shall consist of putting a flame to a sample of the materials by match or lighter. The test shall be conducted in the presence of the Fire Code Official. It shall be done outside the structure, on a



SANTA CLARA COUNTY FIRE DEPARTMENT

1315 Dell Avenue, Campbell, CA 95008 | (408) 378-4010 | SCCFD.org

specimen of the materials approximately 3 inches wide by 10 inches long and orientated by a 45-degree angle from horizontal. When testing, the flame shall be put to the bottom edge of the material for a period of up to 12 seconds. If the material fails to ignite, or it ignites and the flame self-extinguishes when the flame source is removed from the sample, the material is considered to be flame retardant.

- D. Decorative materials, props and/or performer platforms shall not obstruct, confuse, or obscure points of exit, exit signs, exit pathways, emergency lighting or any component of fire protection systems and equipment (i.e. fire extinguishers, fire alarm systems, fire sprinklers, etc.) inside or outside the building.

XIII. Smoke Generators

- A. Use of smoke-generating equipment may be restricted if determined to be incompatible with smoke alarm(s) or if unreasonable patron confusion may result. Care and consideration shall be used with respect to smoke generator and smoke alarm locations. Smoke generator and smoke alarm locations shall be approved by the Fire Department.

XIV. Display of Motor Vehicles

Display of motor vehicles shall be in accordance with Section 3104.18 of the CFC.

XV. Signs

- A. "NO SMOKING" signs shall be conspicuously posted at main entrance and throughout exhibit.

XVI. Prohibited

- A. Inside storage or use of flammable or combustible liquids, gasses, and solids is prohibited. Open flame is prohibited.

XVII. Maintenance

Good housekeeping shall be maintained throughout exhibit and exit pathways at all times.