



## SAFETY REQUIREMENTS FOR SPECIAL AMUSEMENT

### **Purpose:**

To establish minimum fire and/or life safety guidelines for the use and operation of "Haunted Houses" (and similar events whether these events are within a structure or in open air) in the jurisdiction of the Bemidji Fire Department.

### **Scope:**

These requirements shall apply to temporary Haunted Houses, Ghost Walks, Mazes, and similar operations open to the public where combustible decorative materials and confusing sounds and/or visual effects are present. For the purposes of this guideline, certain terms and words are defined as follows:

- Haunted House – A 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, or are disguised or are not readily available due to the method of transportation through the building or structure.
- Ghost Walk, Mazes – similar to haunted houses and may include both indoor and outdoor areas where egress to a public way is similarly not readily identifiable.

### **Guidelines:**

- a. In order to obtain a temporary haunted house Certification of Occupancy, the following requirements must be met prior to Fire Department approval and issuance of the certification of occupancy.
- b. All haunted houses may also be approved by building inspections. All new electrical, plumbing, or air conditioning work performed must meet the current codes as adopted. Wiring shall be installed by a licensed electrician. Permits and inspections are required and can be obtained by contacting building inspections.
- c. Complete set of site and floor plans shall be submitted to the Fire Department for review not less than thirty (30) days prior to the time that the haunted house is to open. These plans shall consist of:
  - i) Dimensional site plan shall indicate the proximity of the event building to other structure or hazardous areas and paths of travel from the event building or area to the public way.
  - ii) Floor plan showing the following:
    - (a) Dimensions (total square footage, width of exits, aisles or interior exits 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 panel.
    - (f) Normal use of the any structures(s) (i.e., auditorium, school, church. Etc.).
    - (g) Staff positions.
    - (h) Existing occupancy load and proposed occupant loading.
  - iii) A written emergency procedure

## Requirements:

- a. Emergency planning
  - i. The maximum occupant (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.
  - ii. A written emergency procedure plan shall be provided with the permit application. All employees shall be trained in emergency procedures.
  - iii. 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 the lights when alerted by either the fire alarm system or otherwise notified of an emergency condition.
  - iv. This event shall be adequately staffed to control the occupant load and assist patrons in existing should an evacuation become necessary. An appropriately staffing level shall be determined upon review of the plans and may be increased at the discretion of the inspector.
  - v. All emergency staff shall carry flashlights and know the location of all exits, fire extinguishers, light switches, electrical panels, and emergency phones.
  - vi. A fire drill may be required.
  - vii. Phone communication shall be readily available for the purpose of calling 911 in the event of an emergency.
- b. During the hours of operation, required exits may not be locked, or latched (unless equipped with panic hardware) and each door shall be operable from the interior of the structure without the use of a key or any special knowledge or effort; all exits must open in the direction of egress or be locked in an open position during the hours of operation.
  - i. Exit signs must function properly and be visible from all areas.
  - ii. All exits, hallways, and aisles leading from buildings are to be kept clear and unobstructed at all times.
  - iii. There shall be no obstruction blocking exit doors from the outside of any building, such as autos parked in doorways or barricades across sidewalks.
  - iv. No curtains, drapes or decorations shall be hung in such a manner as to cover any exits signs.
- c. Approved fire extinguishers (minimum size 2A-10B-C) one per means of egress, 75' of travel, and in the area of entrance. Additional fire extinguishers may be required.
- d. No open flames will be allowed, such as candles or torches.
- e. "No Smoking" signs shall be posted in all designated areas.
- f. Activation of any smoke detection device shall sound an alarm and cause illumination to increase to that required by the Building Code.
- g. Required one UL listed smoke detector for every 900 square feet or fraction thereof – a minimum of two smoke detectors is required. Installation shall be in accordance with the manufacturer's installation instructions and NFPA 72
- h. All curtains, walls, tunnels, sawdust, shavings, table skirts drapes and decorations must be constructed of fire retardant materials or treated with an approved flame retardant solution, per NFPA 701. Treatment shall be renewed as often as may be necessary to maintain the flame retardant effect. Plastic sheeting is not allowed. Flame retardant solution may be obtained by contacting local decoration contractors and flame-proofing companies listed in the phone book. Approval by the Fire Department will be required.
- i. Materials such as (man-made fibers) polyesters, rayon, and nylon are difficult to treat to obtain fire retardant.
- j. "NO SMOKING – BY ORDER OF THE FIRE MARSHAL" signs are required. Provided approved container(s) for use as an ashtray outside of structure.
- k. All employees shall be schooled in:
  - i. Emergency exiting procedures, including location of light switches.
  - ii. Locations and operation of portable fire extinguishers.
  - iii. Location of extra flashlights at entrance/exit in case power goes out to lights

- l. Truck trailers or other similar types of containers that would create a vault like atmosphere when subject to fire, smoke, or toxic fumes may not be used for haunted houses.
- m. Each tour shall be limited to 20 persons and have a guide. Each guide must have an operable flashlight.
- n. If conditions are created which present a hazard to life, a standby fire watch will be required at your expense.
- o. Ceiling level must be at least seven (7') feet six inches (6") including all areas where the public will walk.
- p. No dead-end corridors twenty-five (25') feet or more.

Final approval will be subject to conducting an inspection of the completed work, prior to occupancy. For additional information, please contact the Bemidji Fire Department at 751-8001.