

To: Building and Fire Code Officials  
From: Chris Bainbridge, Director of Codes Enforcement  
Date: September 25, 2015  
**Subject: Haunted Houses/Special Amusement Buildings**

It is the time of year that haunted houses begin to open up. These occupancies are inherently higher risk than the typical assembly and business buildings that we deal with due to the use of settings and scenery, low lighting and obstructed egress paths. It is a good time to review the code requirements for Special Amusement Buildings.

The minimum code for new Special Amusement Buildings must comply with the 2006 International Building Code. The 2006 International Fire Code applies for all existing Special Amusement Buildings. The 2006 NFPA 101 Life Safety Code also applies for those located in a State building or educational occupancy. The State Fire Marshal's Office is involved in plans review and inspection of facilities that have a calculated occupant load of 300 or more. Local governments cannot lessen the requirements, but can accept equivalent methods of protection. Exempt jurisdictions are authorized to adopt and enforce their own building and fire codes. The following jurisdictions are exempt:

Alcoa, Athens, Bartlett, Brentwood, Bristol, Chattanooga, Clarksville, Collierville, Columbia, Cookeville, Dyersburg, Franklin, Gallatin, Gatlinburg, Goodlettsville, Hendersonville, Jackson, Johnson City, Kingsport, Knox County, Farragut, Knoxville, Lebanon, Madison County, Maryville, Memphis/Shelby County, Millington, Montgomery County, Murfreesboro, Mt. Juliet, Nashville/Davidson County (Oak Hill, Belle Meade, Forest Hills, Berry Hill, & Lakewood not included), Oak Ridge, Paris, Pigeon Forge, Sevierville, and White House.

A Special Amusement Building is defined as: 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.

#### CODE REQUIREMENTS FOR NEW BUILDINGS

##### *Fire Alarm System:*

1. Special amusement buildings shall be equipped throughout with an automatic sprinkler system in accordance with Section 903.3.1.1. Where the special amusement building is temporary, the sprinkler water supply shall be of an approved temporary

means. 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 m<sup>2</sup>) and the travel distance from any point to an exit is less than 50 feet (15 240 mm). *2006 IBC 411.4*

2. An approved automatic smoke detection system shall be provided in special amusement buildings in accordance with this section. Exception: In areas where ambient conditions will cause a smoke detection system to alarm, an approved alternative type of automatic detector shall be installed. *2006 IBC 411.3*
3. Upon activation of any single smoke detector, the automatic sprinkler system or any other automatic fire detection device shall immediately sound an alarm at the building at a constantly attended location from which emergency action can be initiated, including the capability of manual initiation of requirements in Section 907.2.11.2. *2006 IBC 411.5*
4. The activation of two or more smoke detectors, a single smoke detector with alarm verification, the automatic sprinkler system or other approved fire detection device shall automatically:
  - a. Cause illumination of the means of egress with light of not less than 1 foot-candle (11 lux) at the walking surface level;
  - b. Stop any conflicting or confusing sounds and visual distractions; and
  - c. Activate an approved directional exit marking that will become apparent in an emergency.

Such system response shall also include activation of a prerecorded message, clearly 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 which is distinctive from other sounds used during normal operation.

The wiring to the auxiliary devices and equipment used to accomplish the above fire safety functions shall be monitored for integrity in accordance with NFPA 72. *2006 IFC 907.2.11.2*

5. An emergency voice/alarm communication system, which is also allowed to serve as a public address system, shall be installed in accordance with NFPA 72 and be audible throughout the entire special amusement building. *2006 IFC 907.2.11.3*
6. Special amusement buildings having an occupant load of 50 or more shall comply with the requirements for the appropriate Group A occupancy. Amusement buildings having an occupant load of less than 50 shall comply with the requirements for a Group B occupancy Exception: Amusement buildings or portions thereof that are without walls or a roof and constructed to prevent the accumulation of smoke. *2006 IBC 411.1*
7. Exit signs shall be installed at the required exit or exit access doorways of amusement buildings. Approved directional exit markings shall also be provided. 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 shall be provided and located not more than 8 inches (203 mm) above the walking surface and on or near the path of egress travel. Such markings shall become visible in an emergency. The directional exit marking shall be activated by the automatic fire detection system and the automatic sprinkler system in accordance with Section 907.2.11.2. *2006 IBC 411.7*

8. The interior finish shall be Class A in accordance with Section 803.1. *2006 IBC 411.8*