



PRESS RELEASE

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Contact: Kim Y. Hylander
Senior Communications Analyst
Office: 703-792-6162
Email: khylander@pwcgov.org

Safety Measures for Halloween Haunted Houses & Carnivals 2023

Halloween season is a fun time of the year; yet it is a time when life-safety issues surrounding the public become a concern. We want to take this opportunity to remind all non-profit organizations, merchants, and school personnel of their responsibility to ensure the safety of their patrons during operation of these activities and events.

Over the years, as haunted houses, corn mazes and similar haunted-house type structures and environments have become popular attractions, the potential for significant fire and safety hazards have increased nationwide. To avoid similar occurrences, please observe the following precautions and regulations in preparing your haunted house or carnival:

1. Highly flammable materials such as cotton batting, straw, dried plant material, certain plastics, etc. shall not be used for decorations or construction.
2. Avoid use of combustible materials in displays. If used, combustibles must be treated with an approved commercial flame-retardant treatment. Samples of all such materials must be submitted or certified for NFPA 701 (measuring fabric flammability) or ASTM E-84 (flame spread or surface characteristics) flame tests prior to use.
3. Extension cords, multiplug adapters, and unfused plug strips are not permitted. Only circuit breaker strips or code approved wiring is permitted.
4. Depending on where the activity is located, approval from the Zoning Division of the Planning Office through a Temporary Activities Permit (TAP) review process may be required (703-792-7615).
5. If any walls, partitions, or raised flooring are to be constructed, approval by the Building Official will be required (703-792-6930). The Building Department is part of the TAP review process.
6. Call the Fire Marshal's Office for an inspection at least 48 hours prior to opening your display to the public (703-792-6360). This can be arranged as part of the TAP process.

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7. Maintain all exits in a clear and useable condition.
8. Know the location of the nearest fire extinguishers and how to use them.
9. Know the location of the nearest alarm box.
10. Make sure you have access to a phone to call the fire department and that everyone knows the emergency number: 9-1-1.
11. Develop an Emergency Evacuation and Fire Safety Plan, a plan document is part of the TAP application packet.

An application process is required for haunted houses and carnivals. Please contact the Fire Marshal's Office at 703-792-6360 for further direction or visit our website, click on Fire Safety and Haunted House - Special Amusement Building <https://www.pwcva.gov/department/fire-marshals-office/haunted-housespecialty-amusement-guidelines>.

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