



**STATE OF NEW HAMPSHIRE DEPARTMENT OF SAFETY**  
Richard M. Flynn, Commissioner



**Division of Fire Safety & Emergency Management**  
**OFFICE OF THE STATE FIRE MARSHAL**  
J. William Degnan, State Fire Marshal

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**AUTOMATIC SPRINKLER SYSTEM REQUIREMENTS IN SPECIAL AMUSEMENT BUILDINGS  
(HAUNTED HOUSES)**

With the Halloween season upon us, it becomes important to remind everyone that all haunted houses must have approved automatic sprinkler systems designed in accordance with NFPA 13, Standard for Installation of Sprinkler Systems. Although all sections of NFPA 101:12 and 13 (New and Existing Assembly Occupancies) apply to these buildings, sprinkler protection is specifically addressed NFPA 101:12.4.7, 2003 edition, Special Amusement Buildings;

**12.4.7.2\*** Every special amusement building, other than buildings or structures not exceeding 3050 mm (120 in.) in height and not exceeding 15 m<sup>2</sup> (160 ft<sup>2</sup>) in aggregate horizontal projection, shall be protected throughout by an approved, supervised automatic sprinkler system installed and maintained in accordance with Section 9.7 of NFPA 101, 2003 edition.

**12.4.7.3** Where the special amusement building required to be sprinklered by 12.4.7.2 is movable or portable, the sprinkler water supply shall be permitted to be provided by an approved, temporary means.

Because of the temporary nature of these structures, we are often asked how should the portable sprinkler systems be maintained, and what should be done when these systems are taken out of service? NFPA 101 addresses all of these concerns. Additional information about fire watches, if required, is also included below.

**9.7.5** All automatic sprinkler and standpipe systems required by this Code shall be inspected, tested, and maintained in accordance with NFPA 25, Standard for the Inspection, Testing, and Maintenance of Water-Based Fire Protection Systems.

**9.7.6.1** Where a required automatic sprinkler system is out of service for more than 4 hours in a 24-hour period, the authority having jurisdiction shall be notified, and the building shall be evacuated or an approved fire watch shall be provided for all parties left unprotected by the shutdown until the sprinkler system has been returned to service.

**A.9.7.6** A fire watch should at least involve some special action beyond normal staffing, such as assigning an additional security guard(s) to walk the areas affected. These individuals should be specially trained in fire prevention and in the use of fire extinguishers and occupant hose lines, in notifying the fire department, in sounding the building fire alarm, and in understanding the particular fire safety situation for public education purposes. Some authorities having jurisdiction

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require fire fighters to be assigned to the area, with direct radio communication to the local fire department. (Also see NFPA 601, Standard for Security Services in Fire Loss Prevention.)

Additional requirements for emergency lighting and smoke detection systems in Special Amusement Buildings (haunted houses) are also outlined in Chapter 12;

**12.4.7.3** Where the nature of the special amusement building is such that it operates in reduced lighting levels, the building shall be protected throughout by an approved automatic smoke detection system in accordance with Section 9.6. Actuation of any smoke detection system device shall sound an alarm at a constantly attended location on the premises. Actuation of the automatic sprinkler system, or any other suppression system, or actuation of a smoke detection system having an approved verification or cross-zoning operation capability shall provide the following:

- (1) Cause illumination in the means of egress to increase to that required by Section 7.8
- (2) Stop any conflicting or confusing sounds and visuals

When approving the design of these systems it is often necessary to except new ways to protect the structure. There are a number of haunted houses in the state that are built within a tent, which may need additional systems in order to properly activate the sprinkler heads. Each construction should be looked at individually and approved accordingly if it satisfies the code AND will protect the occupants.

If you have any questions, please feel free to give our office a call at (603) 271-3294.

Happy Halloween!