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# News Release

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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## Haunted Houses Undergo Safety Inspections Ahead of Halloween Season

**SPRINGFIELD** – The Illinois Department of Labor (IDOL) and the Office of the Illinois State Fire Marshal (OSFM) are teaming up to make sure haunted houses in Illinois are safe before doors open for the Halloween season.

Haunted houses operated by not-for-profit religious, educational, or charitable organizations may apply for an exemption from IDOL inspections. Haunted house operators/owners should contact local authorities to see what requirements apply locally for haunted houses. Local authorities should be providing those inspections. For those municipalities that do not have local codes or inspectors, OSFM will perform a Fire Department Assistance inspection upon receiving a request from the local Fire Chief.

“Spooky season is something many people look forward to in Illinois,” **said IDOL Carnival Manager Brian Fox**. “IDOL’s Amusement Ride and Attractions Safety Inspectors work to ensure that an experience at a haunted house is safe and fun by verifying that operators have taken the necessary precautions before an operating permit is issued.”

Tragic fires in haunted houses during the 1970s and 1980s led to stricter oversight and enhanced safety requirements. Today, most haunted houses in Illinois must have fire alarm systems with smoke detection and be protected by automatic sprinkler systems. For **non-home rule** municipalities, OSFM rules establish the minimum requirements. But local fire and building departments may enforce more stringent additional safety measures. Therefore, owners and operators should be checking with both OSFM and local authorities. Again, OSFM does not have authority within a home rule municipality for haunted houses unless requested by the local Fire Chief.

“The OSFM wants everyone to enjoy a frightful but safe experience when visiting haunted houses this season,” **said State Fire Marshal Michele Pankow**. “Our inspectors are committed to working with owners and operators and local inspectors to quickly address any violations, ensuring their attractions can open safely and remain in compliance with the life safety code.”

During inspections, the State Fire Marshal’s office ensures:

- Exits and pathways are wide enough for the maximum number of visitors

Lincoln Tower Plaza  
524 South 2nd Street, Suite 400  
Springfield, Illinois 62701  
(217) 782-6206  
Fax: (217) 782-0596

Michael A Bilandic Building  
160 North LaSalle, Suite C-1300  
Chicago, Illinois 60601-3150  
(312) 793-2800  
Fax: (312) 793-5257

Regional Office Building  
2309 West Main Street, Suite 115  
Marion, Illinois 62959  
(618) 993-7090  
Fax: (618) 993-7258

- Limited number of dead-end paths
- Exit doors are equipped with panic hardware
- Restrictions on open flame devices or pyrotechnics are followed (OSFM rules)
- Code compliant fire alarm systems are provided.
- If the footprint of the building is greater than 160 ft<sup>2</sup>, sprinkler systems are required.
- Only Class A interior finishes are used.
- Flame resistant decorations
- Workers are trained and prepared for emergency procedures

In addition to fire and safety standards, Illinois law requires criminal background checks, sex offender registry checks, and a written substance abuse policy—including random drug testing—for all amusement attraction workers.

If you suspect a haunted house is operating without a permit, or if you need to report an accident or unsafe condition, contact IDOL at (217) 557-3112 during business hours or (217) 993-2941 after hours. Complaints may also be filed online.

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