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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

September 30, 2022

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## **OSFM and IDOL Stress Safety First at Haunted Attractions**

*Safety features must be in place at haunted houses to prevent tragedies similar to those that occurred in the 1970's and 1980's*

Springfield, Ill - Haunted House season has returned to Illinois and with that comes screams, creaking doors, ghosts and goblins. Safety is a top priority of the Illinois Department of Labor (IDOL) and the Office of the Illinois State Fire Marshal (OSFM) when it comes to these amusements.

“We want to remind local jurisdictions and the owners/operators of ‘Haunted Houses’ that these occupancies can present special hazards that make them particularly vulnerable to fire and fire injuries if applicable codes are not followed. Keeping the public’s and workers’ safety in mind should be top priority for operators of these amusements,” **said Acting Illinois State Fire Marshal Dale Simpson.**

Two tragic fires in the 1970s and 1980s at haunted houses led to closer scrutiny of haunted house safety. Most haunted houses in Illinois today are required to have smoke detectors and be protected by automatic sprinkler systems. The rules of the State Fire Marshal’s office serve as the minimum requirements that must be met, with local fire and building departments possibly imposing more stringent requirements.

The State Fire Marshal’s office notes these additional restrictions:

- Exits and pathways must be wide enough to account for the maximum number of people in the amusement
- Limited number of dead-end paths
- Provision of panic hardware on exit doors
- Restrictions on open flame devices or pyrotechnic special effects
- Furnishings and decorations are required to be flame resistant
- All workers must be trained and prepared for actions to be taken during emergencies

In IDOL's case, haunted house inspections fall under the Department's Amusement Ride and Attraction Safety Division. Halloween is the second busiest season for IDOL's inspectors, following the summer fair season.

"The Illinois Department of Labor, its Amusement Ride and Attraction Safety Division, and other State and local partners, are working hard to ensure public safety during the Halloween haunted house season. That includes inspecting and permitting all haunted houses. A fun and safe visit for everyone who walks through the door is a priority for IDOL," **said Illinois Department of Labor Acting Director Jane Flanagan.**

All haunted houses in Illinois are required to be inspected prior to operation, though haunted houses operated by not-for-profit religious, educational, or charitable organizations can apply for an exemption from IDOL inspection. These haunted houses, however, must still be inspected by local authorities and/or the State Fire Marshal's office.

In addition to checking the safety of the physical facility, including ensuring exits are freely-accessible, state law also requires a criminal background check and sex offender registry check for all amusement attraction workers, and a written substance abuse policy that includes random drug testing.

If you believe no permit was issued for a haunted house you visited or need to report an accident or unsafe conditions at a haunted house, you should call the Department of Labor during business hours at 217-782-9347 or after hours at 217-299-5512. You can also submit a complaint online at the Department's website [Illinois Department of Labor](#).

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