

Health and Safety Guide For Live Performance (Theatre)

This document is a *guide* to assist you in the design of your own *dedicated safety plan*.

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INTRODUCTION

Nowadays, most people in BC's entertainment industry are very aware that their workplaces are subject to Workers Compensation Board regulations, but far fewer people know exactly what the regulations are or how to go about complying with them. Particularly in the world of small production companies and short-term events, some of the rules can appear inappropriate and compliance with them seem a major burden.

Often the difficulty is really one of knowing how to start. Once a system has been put in place and it has become routine to consider health and safety issues as part of each production, the amount of time spent in meeting the regulations is actually rather small and, since the cost is so much less than that of having a worker injured (a lead performer for instance), operating a safety program is only sensible.

Part 1 of this guide is intended to inform you about basic health and safety requirements that apply to all performing arts productions.

Part 2 will help you to meet these requirements and make your event healthier and safer.

Note:

This guide does not replace the Occupational Health and Safety Regulation. You'll still need to refer to the Regulation to determine the exact requirements that apply to your particular situation. Free copies of the Regulation and other Health and Safety publications are available from SHAPE. Call (604) 733-4682.

PART 1: HEALTH AND SAFETY REQUIREMENTS

OVERVIEW

- Almost all workplaces in B.C. — including performing arts productions and events — must follow the requirements of the WCB Occupational Health and Safety Regulation.
- All employers are responsible for providing their workers with adequate instruction in health and safety and for addressing unsafe situations in a timely, effective manner.
- All workers, volunteers and service contractors are required to work safely and to know and follow a project safety plan and their own company guidelines for safe work procedures.

Due diligence

Due diligence is the standard of care required for compliance with the health and safety regulations enforced by the WCB. To meet the standard of due diligence, you must make reasonable decisions according to your background and knowledge, and take all reasonable precautions in the circumstances to carry out your health and safety responsibilities.

- Production staff, technicians, performers, and volunteers should read this guide to better understand the health and safety responsibilities of everyone involved in this production.

Health and safety program

In a situation where 50 or more workers are employed for a minimum of one month, the employer is required to set up a formal **Occupational Health and Safety Program**, which includes maintaining records of meetings, worker orientation and training sessions, accident investigations, etc. In addition, a joint **Health and Safety Committee** must be formed.

Although theatre operation is considered a 'C' hazard, many activities in theatre may push the hazard level to a level 'B', such as electrical work, construction. Please refer to the WCB Regulations.

(Note: The Hazard Classification in Part 33 is found in Schedule 7.)

If a project is very short-term or employs between 9 and 20 workers, a **less formal program** is acceptable, but records must still be kept. The program must include regular safety meetings with the workers, and at least one **Worker Health and Safety Representative** (not a supervisor or manager) should be appointed by the workers whom they will represent.

- Their responsibilities include:

Identifying situations that might be unhealthy or unsafe for workers and recommending ways to eliminate or control potential hazards.

Considering and responding to health and safety complaints or recommendations from the cast and crew.

Promoting safe work practices.

Participating in regular workplace inspections and incident investigations.

Despite this regulation an occupational health and safety program may be required in any workplace when, in the opinion of a WCB officer, such a program is necessary.

Multiple Employers

When two or more employers have workers at a site, each is responsible for the health and safety of their own employees. In addition, where there is a 'prime contractor' in overall charge of the work, that contractor must coordinate the safety-related activities of the other employers and their workers. Where there is no prime contractor, the owner of the workplace has this responsibility.

Orientation

All workers must be given an orientation by their supervisor when starting at a venue. The following topics should be covered:

- Fire exit routes and marshalling area
- Location of first aid kit and fire extinguishers
- How to report accidents and injuries; identity of first aid attendant

- Location of material safety data sheets (MSDS) where required.
- Material storage locations.

(For more information see Part 3 of the Occupational Health & Safety Regulation.)

Safety Inspections

All areas of the workplace are to be regularly inspected to identify hazards, which must then be eliminated or controlled. Inspection is an ongoing task because the workplace is constantly changing. Both venue and production-related items should be inspected thoroughly, for example:

- emergency equipment and exit routes
- backstage lighting
- tripping hazards
- platforms and stairs
- flown items
- electrics
- crew work practices

Inspections should be conducted by a supervisor and a Worker Health and Safety Representative, or by the Health and Safety Committee if there is one. All inspections should be documented.

Many performance-day problems can be forestalled by careful planning during the rehearsal and production period. It is important to make health and safety a regular topic at production meetings.

For more information, see Sections 3.5 to 3.8 of the Occupational Health and Safety Regulation. **Note: You can use the Hazard Identification Checklist at the end of this guide to assist you with your inspection.**

Safe work procedures

It is important for employers to develop written safe work procedures for any potentially hazardous tasks their employees may undertake. In the field of live stage production and performance, such procedures might cover:

- power tool use
- use of harmful solvents, paints and dyes
- use of ladders and lifts
- hanging and focusing lights (details may depend upon the venue being used)
- orchestra pit safety - working near the edge, safety net, etc.
- rigging and flying operations
- special effects materials and operation

Refusing and reporting unsafe work

Did you know that workers have the right to refuse unsafe work? Workers must not carry out (or cause to be carried out) any task they have reasonable cause to believe would create an undue hazard to the health and safety of any person.

When a worker discovers an unsafe condition, or believes he or she is expected to perform an unsafe act, the worker must immediately report it to the supervisor or employer. The supervisor or employer who receives the report must immediately investigate the matter. If there is an unsafe condition, it must be corrected without delay. Sometimes the supervisor or employer may not agree with the worker that the task is dangerous. In this case, the Regulation lists the steps to be followed. See Section 3.12.

Workers must not be disciplined for refusing to perform a task they believe is dangerous. The worker may be assigned alternative work at no loss in pay while the reported unsafe condition is being investigated.

First aid

All workplaces — including performing arts productions — must meet the first aid requirements set out in Part 33 of the Occupational Health and Safety Regulation.

A first aid attendant, holding at least a Level 1 Certificate is required to be present whenever there are more than 6 workers on a shift. Depending on the hazard classification of the workplace, its location and the number of workers present, the requirements increase as set out in Schedule 1 of Part 33. Note that the number of workers is taken to be the total of all those present, even if they work for multiple employers.

If a reportable injury or illness occurs, the related First Aid records must be kept for 10 years.

Hazardous materials

Workers who use, or are exposed to hazardous materials in the workplace must receive training about the Workplace Hazardous Materials Information System. WHMIS is a national program which regulates the identification and labeling of hazardous materials, and requires workers to have access to Material Safety Data Sheets (MSDS), which provide information about the physical properties and toxicology of each material, as well as necessary personal protective devices and emergency procedures. For more information, see Sections 5.3 to 5.24 of the Occupational Health and Safety Regulation or the WCB publication, *WHMIS at Work*.

Investigating accidents and incidents

Employers must investigate all accidents and near misses. Near misses are incidents that cause no visible injury or damage but that could have caused serious injuries or property damage under slightly different circumstances. They should be investigated because they point to conditions or work practices that must be changed to prevent future incidents.

Everyone in the production has a role to play in an accident investigation. Workers must report accidents and incidents to their supervisors. Employers and supervisors must promptly start investigations of accidents and incidents.

After the investigation is complete, an investigation report must be prepared.

For more information, see Sections 3.7 to 3.14 of the Occupational Health and Safety Regulation.

Reporting accidents to the WCB

Employers must immediately report to the WCB accidents that resulted in death or the risk of death. They must report the following work-related injuries and diseases to the WCB within three days:

- A worker is injured and loses consciousness.
- A worker is sent for medical treatment by a first aid attendant or supervisor.
- A worker has an injury or disease that needs medical treatment.
- A worker states that he or she is going to get medical treatment or has already received medical treatment for an injury or disease.
- A worker is (or claims to be) unable to do his or her job because of any injury or disease.
- In an accident, an artificial limb, eyeglasses, dentures, or a hearing aid is broken.

To report an injury or disease, contact the nearest WCB office, or call toll free 1 800 661-2112 (local 3100) during normal business hours. To report an injury or disease after normal business hours, call 604-273-7711.

Conducting an Accident Investigation

- Determine the cause or causes of the accident
- Identify any unsafe conditions, acts, or procedures that contributed to the accident
- Find ways to prevent similar accidents
- Document the investigation

Conducting and Accident Investigation, cont.

Interview witnesses and people involved in the accident or incident — even if the person wasn't present at the accident or incident. For example, it may be appropriate to interview a trainer who instructed the workers involved, months earlier.

Your investigation should determine:

WHO was involved or injured?

WHERE did the accident happen?

WHEN did it occur?

WHAT were the immediate and basic causes?

WHY was the unsafe act or condition allowed?

HOW can a similar accident be prevented?

Records and statistics

You are required to keep all your health and safety records on file. These records will help you identify hazards. You can also use your health and safety records for education and training.

Typical health and safety records include:

- Accident and incident reports
- Inspection and hazard reports
- First aid records
- Education and training records
- Meeting records
- Additional information on the number and types of workplace injuries and diseases

PART TWO: A HEALTH & SAFETY PLAN

A health and safety plan is a procedure for managing health and safety in the workplace. It includes written statements of a production's health and safety commitment and procedures.

The following pages contain an outline for a production H&S plan. Fill in as appropriate, striking out any sections which do not apply to your production. Make copies of pages where more space is required.

File all records generated. In case of a serious injury or incident they may be needed to prove due diligence.

For more information see Occupational Health & Safety Regulation, Section 3.

Health and Safety Plan

Name of Event _____

Name of Venue _____

Date of Event _____

Health and Safety Policy

(Owner of Event/ Producer) _____ intends

(Name of Event) _____ to be a healthy and safe working and performing environment.

To achieve this, management has established and will maintain an occupational health and safety plan designed to prevent injuries and disease through prior planning and regular worker orientation and training meetings, safe work practices, hazard assessments, and inspections.

All employers involved in this production are responsible for providing their workers with adequate instruction in health and safety and for addressing unsafe situations in a timely, effective manner.

All workers, volunteers and service contractors are required to work safely, to abide by any posted health and safety rules of this production and their own company guidelines for safe work procedures.

Signed: _____

Date: _____

This production involves the following parties:

Owner _____

Producer _____

Crew Service _____

Other Production Services: _____

Equipment Suppliers: _____

Volunteers: _____

Draft Agenda, Performer Orientation Meeting

Performers and Stage Management (1st rehearsal):

to be held at _____ Date: _____ Time: _____

Topics:

- Rehearsal hall orientation:
 - exits
 - emergency equipment
 - emergency procedures
 - first aid attendant, name, location, how to call
 - other _____

- Anticipated H&S issues in this production:
 - scenic units
 - stage floor surface
 - costume shoes
 - food allergies
 - fight scenes
 - wardrobe special needs
 - special effects
 - other _____

- Other topics discussed: _____

- Elect Worker H&S Representative Name: _____

Signatures of those attending this meeting (continue on back if necessary):

_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

Draft Agenda, Shop Staff Orientation Meeting

_____ Shop Staff:

to be held at _____ Date: _____ Time: _____

Topics:

- Workshop orientation:
 - exits
 - emergency equipment
 - emergency procedures
 - first aid attendant, name, location, how to call
 - Personal protective equipment: shoes, hard hats, gloves, safety glasses, ear protection, dust masks, respirators, etc.
 - material storage
 - housekeeping
 - other _____

- Anticipated H&S issues in this production:
 - construction materials and methods
 - dust collection
 - ventilation
 - solvents and fumes
 - other _____

- Elect Worker H&S Representative Name: _____

Signatures of those attending this meeting (continue on back if necessary):

_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

Draft Agenda, Stage Crew Orientation Meeting

Stage Crew: to be held on throw-in day Date: _____ Time: _____

Topics:

- Venue Orientation
 - exits
 - emergency equipment
 - emergency procedures
 - first aid attendant, name, location, how to call
 - identify other contractors and employees
 - identify supervisors
 - other _____

- Anticipated H&S issues in this production:
 - orchestra pit
 - maintaining clear exit paths
 - access to heights and fall protection if required
 - rigging issues
 - lighting
 - special effects
 - personal protective devices
 - other _____

- Other topics discussed: _____

- Elect Worker H&S Representative Name: _____

Signatures of those attending this meeting (continue on back if necessary):

Post in workplace:

First Aid Attendants:

	Name	Title
1.		
2.		

First Aid Location:

First Aid Phone Number:

{Name of Hospital}

{Address}

Nearest Hospitals:

Emergency Contact: **911**

Every worker must be made aware of where the first aid for the workplace is located, and how to call the first aid attendant. Post signs in your workplace indicating how to access first aid.

Keep a record of all workplace injuries or diseases on file.

Hazard identification checklist

Use this checklist to help identify hazards. Many of the items will not apply to your production. Simply check off those that do. When you have identified a hazard, you must correct it and *document the action which you took*.

Venue conditions

The venue owner is responsible for maintaining the building in a condition such that workers will not be endangered. If you are renting a reputable performance space, be sure to request that the rental agreement includes a statement from the owner or manager that all building systems are in safe working order. In other situations, you may have to do much more to ensure that your installation can be done safely.

- Check with manager/owner if there are any known hazards associated with venue.
- Review previous hazard assessments at venue.
- Review engineering reports and floor plans that outline pick points, weight loads and structural issues.
- Check that any permanent rigging system is well maintained.
- Check that all ropes, chains and other lines on which scenery is flown are safely secured.
- Check for any fall hazards.
- If there is an orchestra pit, check that it has safety nets or railings in place.
- Ensure all trap doors and pits are adequately marked.
- Check stage floors have appropriate resiliency, traction and are free of splinters, nails and other hazards.
- Determine if there is a first aid room.
- Determine if there are adequate dressing rooms for performers.
- Ensure there are men's and women's washrooms for performers, other workers and audience.
- Determine if there is adequate security at the site especially for those working alone at night.

Electrical

- Check for any potential live electrical hazards (exposed wiring, open electrical boxes etc.) at the venue.
- Check that AC power is grounded and output is adequate for demand required.
- Check that temporary electrical wiring is clearly marked and secured on floors to prevent tripping.
- Ensure stage lights are properly secured and backed up with safety chains.
- Ensure there's adequate lighting backstage.

Stairways

- Make sure treads and backstage stairs are in good condition.

- Check that stairwells are properly lit.
- Check that alleyways are clear of litter and obstacles.

Special effects

- Determine what fogs, smoke or other special effects will be employed in performance.
- Make sure the appropriate MSDS reference sheets are available for reference.
- Make sure appropriate hearing protection for noise is provided. (Firearms, explosions)
- Make sure the appropriate fireproof curtains, props, sets and costumes are used to comply with fire plan.
- If black light is used, ensure that it is low in harmful ultra violet radiation.
- Ensure there are adequate precautions and warnings posted for the use of strobe lights.
- If pyro will be used, check if the necessary permits and permissions have been obtained.

Custom Scenery Construction

- Have thorough conference with the director, designer, technical director, choreographer and other specialists to determine outline specifications for custom scenery pieces.
- Make sure all scenic units are adequately tested before actors are trained on them.
- Ensure that, if the stage is raked, it is no steeper than a safe 1:12 ratio.
- Make sure proper precautions are taken for storage and use of any flown scenery.
- Allow any paints, dyes and solvents used in construction to evaporate completely before props, sets and costumes are used.
- Design hand props with consideration for their specific onstage use.
- Check props for rough edges and other hazards before giving them to performers.

- Ensure performers and other workers are properly instructed in use of personal protective equipment.

Rigging and Fall protection

- Know the fall protection or prevention issues related to your show and determine what fall protection equipment will be needed for performers and other workers.
- Make sure a competent rigger is supervising all rigging and all flying FX.
- Provide written procedures for flying FX to performers and other workers.
- Make sure qualified personnel co-ordinate and train performers and other workers in use of any lifts (scissor, boom, snorkel lifts etc.)
- Ensure ladders are safe and in good condition.
- Place guardrails and hand railings on raised platforms and staircases where possible.