Part One: Health and Safety in the Theatre

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Glossary
Health and Safety in the Theatre

Glossary Items:
- Alberta Human Resources and Employment—AHRE
- Best Practice
- *Occupational Health and Safety Act*—OHS Act
- *Occupational Health and Safety Regulation*—OHS Regulation
- Workplace Health and Safety—WHS

Anyone who has worked in theatre—as a professional artist, an amateur artist, a board member, a technician, etc.—knows that theatre is an anomalous industry. Theatre is a business of constructing realities—simple, elaborate, metaphorical, realistic or fantastical—entirely from scratch. Each production demands an entirely new and specific setting, performance style and overall artistic mood. These demands are met with highly creative design, technical and performance solutions, often as individually beautiful and well crafted as the production itself.

The theatre community is aware that our work and our workplaces are subject to occupational health and safety legislation, but we may not always know exactly what the rules are or how to go about complying with them. **Safe Stages** is designed to assist Alberta theatre companies, artists and workers with the following:

1) understanding and complying with Alberta’s occupational health and safety legislation
2) developing, implementing and maintaining a successful Health and Safety Management System
3) staying safe and healthy for both work and play

**Occupational Health and Safety Legislation**

Whether your theatre company is professional, educational or community/amateur—and whatever your performance venue—you are legally responsible to make sure that your working environment is safe and healthy. Alberta requirements for health and safety are legislated in the *Occupational Health and Safety Act (OHS Act)*, *Occupational Health and Safety Regulation (OHS Regulation)* and *Occupational Health and Safety Code (OHS Code)*. These documents are available both for purchase and for viewing or downloading on the Alberta Human Resources and Employment (AHRE) Workplace Health and Safety (WHS) website at [www.worksafely.org](http://www.worksafely.org).

Every employer and organization is required to have access to the OHS Act, Regulation and Code: you must either be able to locate the documents online at any time, or own a copy of the printed legislation and ensure it is accessible to workers.

While much of Alberta’s occupational health and safety legislation applies to theatre, the OHS Act, Regulation, and Code do not contain legislation or recommendations that are theatre-specific. Alberta’s health and safety legislation is, for the most part, hazard-based, not industry-based. It is designed to cover a broad range of professions, fields and business types, and its requirements apply more readily to prominent industries with more obvious safety hazards: for example, construction, landscaping and rigging (oil—not scenery).
Safe Stages is a guide to occupational health and safety legislation for Alberta theatre companies, artists and workers—it explains the main principles and terms found in OHS legislation, indicates relevant sections of legislation for various departments and jobs in the industry and offers recommendations—“best practices”—to help employers and workers comply with legislation and create a healthy and safe working environment. Theatre personnel are responsible for knowing the legislation and taking all necessary steps to comply with OHS requirements. Keep in mind that legislated requirements are minimum requirements—best practices may, and often do, exceed these requirements.

The following list summarizes all topics covered by the OHS Code. Topics that may apply to theatres are marked in bold.

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Health and Safety Challenges in the Theatre

Safe Stages does not guarantee that implementing a Health and Safety Management System or complying with occupational health and safety legislation will be easy or straightforward. Everyone in the theatre community is busy and resources are stretched. Health and safety may not always seem like a priority, especially when tech week is behind schedule and opening night is looming, but we must work together towards this end. The most compelling reason to participate in and enforce occupational health and safety is the need to protect our art form—we must maintain quality of life for people who work and volunteer in the arts. No company wants a technician or performer to be injured before or during a run and tools, equipment and scenery are costly to replace. Theatre companies also need to be concerned with potential lawsuits, charges, fines and/or jail time and worker’s compensation arising from unsafe work conditions.

Attitude—It is not unusual to meet with resistance to health and safety within a theatre company. In an industry comprised of short-term projects and events, employers and workers do not often think towards or plan for a long-term initiative. The words “health and safety” can quickly conjure images of uniformed inspectors, stacks of insurance papers and sweeping capital renovations. Some theatre practitioners believe that prioritizing health and safety will destroy art or that the business of creating art renders the theatre industry exempt from OHS legislation: "We're special. We're different. It's not a construction site. It’s temporary." Seasoned veterans might view occupational health and safety requirements as an imposition—why learn a safer method of performing a task if you have been doing it a different way for your entire career and no one has been hurt? Finally, we live by the classic saying “the show must go on”—which sometimes means in spite of the risks involved.

Creative Risks vs. Safety Risks—“Risk taking” is a common catchphrase in the theatre industry. It is what we do. We need to understand when a creative risk crosses the line and becomes a safety risk. No matter how affecting, transformative or technically spectacular a production, an audience member’s focus will be pulled from the performance if he or she can identify obvious safety hazards onstage or thinks even for a second that a performer might literally be in danger.

Changing Variables—The rehearsal and production process is comprised of several situations in which many variables—design, lighting and sound cues, props, blocking, scene changes, etc.—are introduced and/or change at once. There is heightened potential for injury at these times.
Time Pressure, Fatigue and Stress—Time is always a factor. Theatre involves frequent, hard deadlines that are often difficult to meet. Fatigue and stress are common leading up to opening night, as everyone makes sacrifices to ensure the show is ready and no one wants to “complain.” It is particularly difficult to maintain health and safety awareness and ensure safe work procedures when the pressure is on, and therefore even more important for everyone to look out for each other. Everyone has the right and the responsibility to voice health and safety concerns resulting from last-minute work, late nights or flared egos.

Variety of Training and Experience—People come to work in the arts with a wide range of skills, training and experience: a degree or diploma in technical theatre or performance, hands-on training in professional or community theatres, high school productions, etc. It is rare that a group of workers will have similar backgrounds or training, or have received uniform instruction in how to perform a specific task. Furthermore, the theatre community is a mobile and seasonal work force. This means that theatre companies must offer training frequently, enforce safe work practices on a regular basis and ensure all workers are setting a good example.

Funding and Money—Most theatre companies face ongoing financial challenges that affect staffing, facility maintenance and repair, purchasing decisions, production design, etc. It is equally as important to budget for and allocate appropriate resources to health and safety activities and equipment. Operating a Health and Safety Management System is fiscally responsible because the costs associated are typically much less than that of paying financial penalties, replacing damaged equipment, lost work time, or, most importantly, having a worker injured. The bottom line in occupational health and safety for the theatre industry is this: if you can’t afford to perform a task safely, you can’t afford to do it at all.

Health and Safety Advantages in the Theatre

Even though theatre is fraught with unique and often unusual challenges impacting health and safety, developing and implementing a Health and Safety Management System is by no means an insurmountable task. We are a creative and diligent industry with intense respect for our work, and we believe that protecting our peers and colleagues is important. Planning for a Health and Safety Management System is not unlike planning for a production—they are built from the ground up and molded over time, in spite of any obstacles.

Creativity and Ingenuity—Theatre requires creativity in all its activities, and health and safety is no different. The creative process can present many health and safety challenges—often specific to an individual production and in some cases completely bizarre—and it is not always possible to open a supplier’s catalogue and find an instant solution. There are ample opportunities for creative, customized solutions.

Community—The theatre industry is a tight-knit community whose members have frequent opportunities to communicate. The same transitory nature of the work of performers, directors, designers, craftspeople and technicians that can impede health and safety education also allows workers to view and receive health and safety training from several different organizations and companies. We can work together to improve health and safety in theatres across the province.
Motivation—Theatre practitioners are notorious perfectionists—detail-oriented and insistent on producing quality work. We know that visible hazards will mar the overall look of a production, and take the necessary safety measures to ensure a polished show. We know that adequate rehearsal time, both in the rehearsal hall and onstage, affords greater comfort and reliability during performance. We know that our livelihood depends on staying in good health and physical shape and that a severe injury or illness can lead to months or years without work, and medical coverage may not be available. Doing a job safely means doing it right (and vice versa).

Knowledge and Enthusiasm—While there may be a few unwilling members of the theatre community, the majority of the artist and production workforce has a strong desire to improve health and safety systems and to learn the safest and most efficient practices. The Alberta theatre industry boasts an ever-expanding base of young, enthusiastic workers. Basic occupational health and safety information and training is part of the Alberta high school curriculum and post-secondary theatre programs include theatre-specific health and safety training for their students.

Existing Practices—Although most theatre companies do not currently have a formal Health and Safety Management System in place, the theatre industry already uses many practices and procedures that demonstrate an acute awareness of occupational health and safety. Some of theatre’s most fundamental practices—so deep-rooted that anyone who has worked on a production would know them—are done in the name of maintaining a safe work and performance environment, even if theatre practitioners do not consciously acknowledge that particular aim. Practices such as rehearsing in itself, pre show checks of lamps and moving scenery, fight warm-ups, the provision of rehearsal costumes and props, calling “going to black” before the lights go out and glow-taping hazardous edges are all health and safety activities. A Health and Safety Management System is simply a means of formalizing and perpetuating these practices.
Health and Safety Management Systems

Appendix Items:

• Health and Safety Policy Sample 1—Professional Association of Canadian Theatres (PACT)
• Health and Safety Policy Sample 2—Safety & Health in Arts, Production and Entertainment (SHAPE)
• Health and Safety Policy Sample 3—AHRE Partnerships in Health & Safety

Feel free to adapt these policies to suit your needs.

A safe and healthy workplace doesn’t just happen—it takes commitment, planning and everyone’s active participation. Health and Safety Management Systems are the processes used to minimize the incidence of injury and illness at a workplace. They have been proven to increase productivity and quality of work and generally improve worker morale. Many employers therefore view the operation and administration Health and Safety Management Systems as an investment.

Health and Safety Policy

A Health and Safety Policy is a written and signed document that reflects an employer’s commitment to providing and ensuring a healthy and safe workplace. It is a statement of intent and a commitment to plan for the successful implementation of a comprehensive Health and Safety Management System.

A Health and Safety Policy must be:

• written
• signed by the head of the organization
• reviewed at least annually (or modified as needs or legal requirements change)
• posted in a conspicuous spot in the workplace
• communicated to all workers/volunteers

Policies should reference:

• the company’s commitment to providing a safe and healthy workplace
• the overall goals and objectives of the company’s Health and Safety Management System
• the responsibilities of management, workers and contractors regarding health and safety
• the prevention of personal injury or illness
• the prevention of loss or damage to property, materials, product and the environment
• compliance with relevant legislation
• adherence in all work activities

Theatre Alberta recommends that theatre companies adopt the following credo in their Health and Safety Policies: there is no task so urgent that it cannot be completed safely.

Health and Safety Management Systems

A Health and Safety Management System is the overall set of documents, regulations, hazard assessments, inspections, control measures, training schedules and administrative procedures that
allow a company to execute and realize its Health and Safety Policy. Health and Safety Management Systems should be viewed as works in progress with evolving issues.

The components of a Health and Safety Management System vary depending on the nature and scope of individual industries and companies. The following components are considered to be essential for an effective Health and Safety Management System:

- a health and safety policy that clearly articulates the employer’s commitment to health and safety in the workplace
- assessment of hazards at the workplace
- control measures to eliminate or reduce risks from hazards
- worker competency and training
- work site inspection
- injury/incident investigation
- emergency response planning
- administration

**Step-by-Step Guide to Building a Health and Safety Management System**

1) Make a list of all health and safety practices and information that already exist within your theatre company. Ask around—many departments and workers will have practices in place that could qualify as components of a Health and Safety Management System and/or will have researched topics of particular interest to them. Gather all of this information together, and you may find there is already more in place than you realized.

2) Identify what legislation applies to the work you do.

3) Exercise due diligence. (See Chapter 3) This means “take every precaution reasonable in the circumstances for the protection of the worker.” In order to take precautions, you need to know what hazards exist.

4) List the hazards that workers are exposed to within your company. (See Chapter 4) Hazard assessment and control is the foundation of occupational health and safety and a requirement under the OHS Code. Hazards may include: physical hazards (material handling, working at heights, electricity, noise, etc.); chemical hazards (paints, glues, fog fluids, etc.); biological hazards (mould, body fluids, etc.); and psychosocial hazards (stress, fatigue, violence, etc.).

5) Review the kinds of injuries that workers and patrons have experienced at your workplace. Patterns will indicate issues you need to address.

6) Take every possible opportunity to show your workers that you are committed to good health and safety practices by becoming actively involved.

Be sure to address the essential components listed above, as well as additional, company-specific elements such as communication tools, shop and rehearsal hall safety orientations, First Aid, Workplace Hazardous Materials Information System (WHMIS), etc.
You can pull most of this information together on your own, but if you are starting from scratch, you may wish to arrange for a consultant to assist you. Third party audits of Health and Safety Management Systems can also be arranged.

The following 3 Rs sum up a general approach to health and safety management: Respect, Respond and Require.

**Respect** the incredible diversity of workers/artists and the unique nature of each project. The work in studios, shops and rehearsal halls is different every day, and it takes place in an atmosphere of continuous creativity and change.

**Respond** to questions and requests as quickly as possible. Artists or workers who ask questions or challenge health and safety information are engaged and should be encouraged. If there isn’t an immediate answer, refer them to someone else or let them know when more information will be available.

**Require** people to comply with legislation, wear personal protective equipment and report all hazards, injuries and incidents to their supervisors. All theatre personnel must agree that workplace injuries and illnesses are unacceptable and work together to prevent any such occurrences.
Employers and Workers: Roles and Responsibilities

Appendix Items:
- Imminent Danger Procedure
- Due Diligence Checklist—Canadian Centre for Occupational Health and Safety

Glossary Items:
- Competent Worker
- Due Diligence
- Employer
- Imminent Danger
- Prime Contractor
- Reasonably Practicable
- Reasonable Person Test
- Worker

The *OHS Act* sets standards to *protect and promote* the health and safety of workers throughout Alberta. It outlines the rights and responsibilities of employers, as well as the rights and responsibilities of workers. This chapter details these rights and responsibilities and discusses “due diligence” in the workplace.

Understanding the definitions and applications of *employer* and *worker* in the theatre industry can be a difficult task. We work simultaneously for professional, independent or community theatres, either on salary, on contract or as a volunteer. We produce in venues rented from other theatre companies and in found space managed by other industries, as well as present other companies’ work in our own venues.

Health and safety success is dependent on understanding and fulfilling your roles and responsibilities, and it is therefore important to clearly identify who the employer(s) and worker(s) is in each and every work situation. While individual companies will differ in how they delegate health and safety responsibilities and tasks, these tasks must be delegated and exercised. All roles and responsibilities must be determined before work starts: both at the start of the production season and for each individual production.

**Employers**

Under the *OHS Act*, employers are responsible for ensuring the health and safety of all workers at the work site. **Specific requirements are outlined throughout the OHS Act, Regulation and Code depending on the work that is to be done.**

You are an employer if:
- You employ one or more workers,
- You are designated to represent an employer,
- Your responsibility is to oversee workers’ health and safety, or
• You are self-employed.

Reference: *OHS Act, Section 2(1)*

Employer responsibilities include:
• Keeping equipment in safe working order
• Properly labeling and storing dangerous chemicals
• Ensuring workers perform their duties as required by OHS legislation
• Ensuring workers have the training and experience needed to do their jobs safely
• Informing workers of any dangers at the work site
• Monitoring workers who may be exposed to certain hazards such as chemicals or noise

Reference: *OHS Regulation, Sections 12, 13 and 15*

“Employers” in the theatre can be the Board of Directors, producers, artistic directors, general managers, production managers, technical directors, etc. depending on the company and the work being performed.

**Prime Contractors**

If there are two or more employers involved in work at a work site **at the same time**, there must be a “**prime contractor**.” The prime contractor for a work site is:
• The contractor, employer or other person who enters into an agreement with the owner of the work site to be the prime contractor, or
• If no agreement has been made or is in force, the owner of the work site.

Prime contractors are not required to be present at the work site, but they must ensure, as far as reasonably practicable, compliance with OHS legislation.

Reference: *OHS Act, Section 3*

Situations where “prime contractor” status may be applicable in the theatre include the presentation of touring productions, the producing of theatre in rented or found venues and any work where several self-employed workers are working together, such as co-ops and freelance call work. The delegation and/or transfer of responsibilities should be in writing.

**Workers**

A worker is a person engaged in an occupation. Workers must take reasonable care to protect the health and safety of themselves and other workers.

Reference: *OHS Act, Section 2(2)*

Everyone else, with the exception of students engaged in course work, is a “worker,” *including all volunteers.*
Students

Although the definition of “worker” is broad enough to include students, the definition of “employer” is difficult to apply to a school. The official definition of “employ” is “to use the services of someone.” In the context of a student and a school, it is difficult to see how the school can be considered to be using the services of a student—the reverse is more likely the case.

OHS legislation does not apply to students receiving training in an educational setting, regardless of the activities being performed, e.g. woodworking class at a grade school, automotive repair course at a technical school, chemistry laboratory course at a university, etc. Responsibility for the health and safety of students rests with the school under existing legislation that applies to educational institutions.

Secondary and post-secondary theatre and drama instructors and programs/departments should, however, endeavour to meet all legislated requirements and responsibilities of employers, including the operation and administration of a Health and Safety Management System. Students should be informed of and protected from hazards and trained in hazard control methods and other health and safety practices as part of their course work.

Imminent Danger

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<td><strong>Workers have the duty</strong> to refuse work in the case of imminent danger. “Imminent danger” means any danger that isn’t normal for a job, or any dangerous conditions under which a worker wouldn’t normally carry out their work. If workers think their work may put them or another worker in imminent danger, they <strong>must</strong> refuse to do it.</td>
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<td><strong>Reference:</strong> <em>OHS Act, Section 35</em></td>
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**Imminent Danger Example**—A stagehand who has not been trained in fall protection is asked by his employer to work at a height of 7 metres (20 feet). (Fall protection is required for work above 3 metres.) The stagehand must refuse to carry out the work and inform the employer of the refusal and the reason for the refusal. The employer must investigate and take action to eliminate the immediate danger.

**General Duty Clause**

Every province and territory in Canada has similar occupational health and safety legislation that describes the obligations of employers and workers; this part of the legislation is commonly referred to as the “General Duty Clause.”

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<td><strong>The General Duty Clause</strong> requires that, as far as it is reasonably practicable to do so, employers must ensure the health and safety of all workers at their work site and workers must protect their own health and safety and the health and safety of their fellow workers. Additionally, it requires employers to ensure their workers are aware of their responsibilities and workers to cooperate with employers to these ends. If work is contracted, contractors must also ensure that employers</td>
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working under them comply with OHS legislation (for example, a Technical Director must ensure self-employed technicians working in his or her theatre comply with all OHS legislation).

The General Duty Clause also requires suppliers to ensure that all materials (tools, appliances, equipment, hazardous substances, etc.) are in safe operating condition and comply with OHS legislation.

Reference: *OHS Act, Section 2*

**Due Diligence**

Due diligence is the level of judgment, care, prudence, determination and activity that a person would reasonably be expected to exercise under particular circumstances. Applied to occupational health and safety, due diligence means that employers must take all reasonably practicable precautions, under particular circumstances, to prevent injuries or incidents at the work site. This duty also applies to situations that are not specifically addressed in OHS legislation. For example, if a theatre decided to include a bungee trapeze routine in a production, they would be expected to take all reasonably practicable precautions to prevent injuries and incidents, even though there is no specific reference in the *OHS Code* to that type of work.

Due diligence is an important legal defense for a person charged under occupational health and safety legislation following an incident. A defendant may be acquitted if he or she can prove that due diligence was exercised: that all precautions, reasonable under the circumstances, were taken to protect workers’ health and safety. A prosecutor would attempt to point out all reasonable alternatives the employer could have followed to prevent the incident.

Due diligence is also, however, as much a culture and way of doing business as it is a legal defense. Companies with managers and workers that always ask themselves “Have I done everything reasonably practicable to make my work site safe?” before they do their work will always outperform those that do not.

**Due Diligence Example**—You give specific instructions to a competent worker to lock out a piece of equipment before working on it, using locks you provide for that purpose. (According to the OHS Code, a competent worker is someone who is adequately qualified, suitably trained and has sufficient experience to safely perform his or her work.) The worker then forgets to lock out the equipment and is injured when someone else turns it on. Even though the law was violated, you could avoid charges or be acquitted, as the actions you took to prevent the incident were “reasonably practicable” under the circumstances.

OHS legislation is “strict liability” legislation. Strict liability laws afford individuals the opportunity to make rational decisions: you have the option of deciding whether or not to take a particular action depending on the circumstances. Instead of complying with the specific rules presented in the legislation, you can do everything “reasonably practicable” and demonstrate “due diligence.”
Reasonably Practicable Example—The OHS Code, Part 12, Section 186(1) states that “an employer must ensure that lighting at a work site is sufficient to enable work to be done safely.” While production teams cannot comply directly with this part of the legislation by keeping the house and work lights on at all times, actions such as calling “going to black” during rehearsals and marking scenery hazards with glow tape qualify as “reasonably practicable” safety measures as long as they are sufficient to prevent injuries or incidents under the circumstances.

“Reasonably practicable” may seem like a subjective method of determining a defendant’s guilt or innocence, however it is a legally defined term that is measured using the “reasonable person test.” The reasonable person test is an assessment of what a dozen peers would consider reasonable under a similar set of circumstances. The result is a balanced, wise and defendable judgment.

All elements of due diligence—plans and actions taken to ensure the safety of workers—must be documented and in effect in the event of an injury or incident. Due diligence is demonstrated by your actions before an incident or injury occurs, not after. Documentation should include formally developed and printed materials including policies, procedures, forms, checklists, workplace investigations and hazard assessments, first aid and incident reports, memos, training records, meeting records and statistics.

Enforcement

Failure to prove that you have been duly diligent in complying with OHS legislation can result in significant penalties. The penalty for a first offence in Alberta can be up to six months of jail-time or $500,000, or both; for second or subsequent offenses the penalties double. While these costs are significant, the emotional costs of losing a fellow worker and economic costs of lost work time or destroying a piece of important/expensive equipment are far greater.

Criminalization of Occupational Health and Safety Offenses

Bill C-45, an amendment to the Criminal Code of Canada, allows law enforcement agencies to charge organizations and individuals who fail to protect workers and the public with a criminal offense. Broadly speaking, the Criminal Code applies to any individual who undertakes, even presumably on his or her own initiative, to direct the work of another. Under the Criminal Code, the liability is expanded to apply to “representatives” of any “organization,” including informal, non-incorporated groups. The Criminal Code duty requires that reasonable steps be taken to prevent bodily harm to any person, be they workers or members of the public who may enter or be affected by a workplace—the public can include audience members, renters in your facility, etc. For example, scenery must not obstruct fire exits and pyrotechnic effects must not be placed where they could injure patrons.

Insurance

As with any industry, insurance is a challenging issue. Most theatre companies will require various different types of insurance policies, depending on the work done by the company, the
number of workers/volunteers employed and whether or not you own, manage or rent your theatre space.

It is always advisable to research and discuss your options with a qualified insurance broker. Following that, ensure that someone on the Board of Directors or on staff at your theatre intimately understands the clauses and intricacies of your company’s insurance policies.

The following policies are common for theatre companies:

- Commercial Liability Insurance—covers the Board of Directors in the event of a lawsuit
- Accident Liability Insurance—covers severe incidents based on full-time work (i.e. loss of limbs, permanent disability, etc.)
- Building Insurance—covers the physical plant and its contents (if you own or manage a venue, your insurance broker should visit annually for an inspection of the facility; you must also annually report added assets, such as renovations and technical equipment)
- Tenant Liability/Third Party Liability Insurance—covers your company while working in a rental facility; most rental facilities require this of each renter
- Workers’ Compensation

Workers’ Compensation Board

Workers’ Compensation is a disability insurance system that protects employers and workers against the impact of work-related injury or illness. It compensates workers for lost income, health care and other costs related to their injury or illness. It also protects employers from being sued by their workers if they are injured or become ill as a result of their work.

The Workers Compensation Board (WCB) Alberta (www.wcb.ab.ca) is a non-profit corporation legislated to administer the workers’ compensation system for the province. Employers pay premiums to fund this no-fault system that provides compensation to workers for work-related injuries and occupational disease.

Under the Workers’ Compensation Act, employers must complete and submit a reporting form within 72 hours of a work-related injury or illness.

All Alberta theatre companies with paid workers are required to have a WCB account in order to compensate workers in the event of a work-related injury or illness. Companies can also apply to the WCB in writing for additional coverage for their volunteers. If a volunteer is injured or becomes ill while working for the theatre company, the WCB will assess the volunteer’s total lost earnings from all volunteer and paid positions.

Volunteer-run amateur theatre companies can also apply for a WCB policy. Under this policy, a volunteer injured or rendered ill while performing unpaid work for the theatre company could receive workers’ compensation for his or her total lost earnings from all full- or part-time “day jobs” and volunteer hours.
If a theatre company (professional or amateur) applies for WCB coverage for its volunteers, the company must pay WCB premiums for all volunteers at the theatre.

Workers’ Compensation Example—A professional tradesperson works full-time for a roofing company and volunteers evenings and weekends to build sets for a community theatre. While installing a set one evening, the tradesperson trips on a tool left on the stage and breaks his ankle, leaving him in a cast for four weeks and unable to do any paid or volunteer work. If the community theatre company has a WCB policy for its volunteers, they can apply for workers’ compensation on the tradesperson’s behalf. Compensation will be assessed based on his lost hours at the roofing company as well as any lost volunteer hours. If, however, the company does not have a WCB policy, the WCB will view the injury as sustained through a “hobby,” and the tradesperson will not be able to seek compensation through either the community theatre or the roofing company.
Hazard Assessment and Control

Appendix Items:
• Hazard Assessment Form Sample—AHRE
• Hazard Assessment Checklist—SHAPE

Glossary Items:
• Hazard
• Hazard Assessment
• Hazard Control
• Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)
• Safe Work Practice
• Safe Work Procedure

Hazard assessment and control is the foundation of occupational health and safety and a requirement under Part 2 of Alberta’s OHS Code. All employers must perform and formally document regular hazard assessments at their work sites.

Identifying and Assessing Hazards

Within the theatre industry, hazards should be identified and assessed on three levels:

1. for the facility/venue/work site
2. for each department (Wardrobe, Props, Scenic Construction, Scenic Art, Stage, Front of House, etc.)
3. for each production

Benefits of performing hazard assessments include reducing the number and severity of workplace injuries or damages to equipment and property; identifying poor or missing procedures; identifying areas that need worker training; increasing workers’ ownership of occupational health and safety; and providing a useful tool when investigating incidents.

Hazards are grouped into four categories:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Physical Hazards</th>
<th>Such as:</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Lifting and handling loads (e.g. manual materials handling)</td>
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<td>Repetitive motions</td>
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<td>Slipping and tripping hazards (e.g. poorly maintained floors)</td>
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<td>Moving parts of machinery</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Working at heights (e.g. elevated platforms, roofs)</td>
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<td>Pressurized systems (e.g. piping, vessels, boilers)</td>
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<td>Vehicles (e.g. forklifts, trucks, pavers)</td>
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<td>Fire</td>
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<td>Electricity (e.g. poor wiring, frayed cords)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Excess noise (e.g. portable hand held tools, engines)</td>
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</table>
## Chemical Hazards

Such as:
- Chemicals (e.g. paints, battery acids, solvents, cleaners)
- Dusts (e.g. from grinding, asbestos removal, sandblasting)
- Fumes (e.g. welding)
- Mists and vapours
- Gases

## Biological Hazards

Such as:
- Viruses, fungi, bacteria
- Moulds
- Blood and body fluids
- Sewage

## Psychosocial Hazards

Such as:
- Working conditions
- Stress
- Fatigue
- Workplace violence
- Working alone

Employers must:
- Assess a work site identifying existing or potential hazards
- Prepare a written and dated hazard assessment that includes the methods used to eliminate or control the hazards identified (a properly completed checklist is acceptable as a written hazard assessment)
- Where possible, involve workers in the hazard assessment
- Make sure workers are informed of the hazards and the methods used to control the hazards

An employer must make sure that a hazard assessment is done:
- At reasonably practicable intervals to prevent the development of unsafe and unhealthy working conditions
- When a new work process is introduced
- When a work process or operation changes
- Before the construction of a new work site

**Reference OHS Code, Part 2**

In its simplest form, a hazard assessment answers the question “What if …?”
- there isn’t a guardrail on the staircase the sword fight takes place on?
- the actors are allowed to do costume quick-changes in the prop shop?
- the scenic painters do last-minute touch-ups in the theatre rather than in the ventilated paint shop?
- one of our workers becomes injured or dies because …?
All equipment, tools, work areas and processes are to be carefully assessed for hazards. A cooperative approach between management, production managers, technical directors, designers, craftspeople, stage management, directors, actors and crew is recommended.

There are a number of ways to identify hazards:

- **walk around and look** at the work site and at how work is done; ask workers what they consider unsafe
- **think** about what could possibly go wrong, being sure not to overlook things that people may have “worked around” for years
- **review** any information you have on a particular piece of equipment (manufacturer’s specifications) or chemical (Material Safety Data Sheet [MSDS]) to see what it says about safety precautions
- **talk** to others in similar industries to find out what sort of incidents they have had

Formal processes for conducting hazard assessments include:

- **physical inspections** using a checklist
- **task or job hazard analysis**—breaking down jobs into tasks and identifying the hazards involved with each task
- **process analysis**—following a process from start to finish and identifying the hazards involved at each stage
- **incident investigation findings**—results of incident investigations may identify the hazards involved

Each identified hazard must be documented. To assess risk, look at three factors:

1) **consequences** if the hazard is not controlled—determine how severe the loss could be
2) **probability** of an incident occurring
3) **frequency** of exposure to the hazard

Hazards that workers will have to contend with in the very near future, that have the potential to affect a large number of workers or that pose a severe risk of injury or illness must be labeled as immediate hazards and dealt with promptly.

**Eliminating and Controlling Hazards**

Whenever possible, hazards should be **eliminated**. If this is not possible they must be **controlled**. Control means reducing the hazard to levels that do not present a risk to worker health. Controls, in order of preference, include:

1. engineering controls
2. administrative controls
3. personal protective equipment (PPE)
4. a combination of the above

Finances and budgeting are always an issue in occupational health and safety—but eliminating and controlling hazards does not always have to mean shelling out funds for capital expenses.
For example, if a work platform poses a fall hazard, a supervisor could erect a temporary guardrail to prevent workers from falling; meanwhile, the Board of Directors could plan for a permanent guardrail in next year’s budget.

**Engineering Controls**

Engineering controls involve the elimination or engineering out of hazards and are the first and preferred choice of hazard control methods.

- **Eliminate**—First try to eliminate the hazard completely. This could mean removing trip hazards on the floor, disposing of chemicals, etc.
- **Substitute**—If it is not practical to eliminate the hazard completely, try to substitute it with something safer, such as using smaller packages to reduce the weight of items that have to be manually handled, using a less toxic chemical, etc.
- **Isolate**—Use soundproof barriers to reduce noise levels, use an enclosed spray booth for spray painting, use remote control systems to operate machinery, etc.
- **Engineer**—Build a catwalk with guardrails and a permanent access ladder instead of using a portable ladder, install local exhaust ventilation, etc.

**Administrative Controls**

Administrative controls are the second choice of hazard control methods and include: the development and use of safe work procedures; the consideration of worker training, scheduling and supervision; the routine maintenance of equipment; company purchasing decisions; etc.

Any identified hazardous task or situation that workers may undertake or find themselves in should have an accompanying safe work procedure/policy. These are **formal and written** documents developed by employers in direct consultation with the workers who do the work. When inclusively developed and enforced, safe work procedures increase awareness and confidence in the workplace.

Safe work procedures/policies are recommended for the following:
- tool use—hand tools and power tools
- use of controlled and/or harmful products—including special effects such as pyrotechnics and atmospherics
- working at heights—including the use of ladders and personnel lifts, orchestra pits, etc.
- venue and set installation and strike
- hanging, cabling, patching and focusing lights
- rigging and flying operations
- rehearsal hall, dressing room and backstage etiquette
- distractions: use of cell phones and personal music devices during work and general background music in work areas
- worker scheduling/hours of work, including guidelines as to the number of workers per supervisor
- working alone
- company vehicles/general driving
Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)

Personal protective equipment (PPE) is a form of hazard control used to lessen the potential harmful effects of exposure to a known hazard. Although an important part of health and safety management, PPE is considered the last resort of hazard control, used only after engineering controls and administrative controls have been put into place/practice.

Employers must:
• Identify what type of and when PPE is required based on hazard assessments
• Ensure workers are trained in the correct use of all required PPE
• Ensure workers wear/use PPE
• Ensure PPE is maintained and is in a condition to perform the function for which it was designed
• Ensure PPE meets standards listed in the OHS Code

Workers must:
• Maintain and use appropriate PPE as required

Reference: OHS Code, Part 18

Types of PPE required for work in theatre may include:
• body protection (coveralls, chemical protective clothing, aprons, sunscreen)
• eye protection (safety/impact glasses, splash goggles)
• face protection (welding face shields)
• fall protection (fall arrest harnesses)
• foot protection (welding face shields)
• hand protection (various gloves)
• head protection (hard hats)
• hearing protection (ear plugs, ear muffs)
• respiratory protection (air-purifying respirators)

Employers have several options for providing PPE. Note that workers should participate in the selection, use and maintenance of PPE. Employers may:
• require workers to obtain and bring their own PPE as a condition of employment or volunteering (and then ensure that the PPE is acceptable)
• provide an allowance for the worker or volunteer to purchase PPE
• provide PPE at the workplace

PPE should be inspected before each use and maintained and stored according to manufacturer’s specifications. PPE should not be modified to reduce discomfort.

In addition to PPE, other safety equipment, such as eye wash stations and spray booths, can be installed in the workplace.
For any task that poses respiratory hazards, enclosed spray booths and/or air purification respirators should be used. The following guidelines are recommended:

For spray booths:
- ensure the amount of ventilation required is properly assessed
- ensure the ventilation systems installed are properly designed and maintained
- train workers to properly operate and maintain installed ventilation systems
- provide appropriate protective equipment, including respirators

For respirators:
- determine oxygen concentration in the air
- determine the physical form of the contaminant
- determine the Occupational Exposure Limit (OEL) for the contaminant and its concentration in the air
- consider the length of time the respirator will be needed
- know the toxic properties of the contaminant
- train workers in how to detect the contaminant
- address the need for emergency escape
- proper respiratory protection equipment fit testing is essential

PPE Example—While working on a strike I did not take the time to protect my hands properly. The set and several props were constructed of rough fir and the deck was covered in two tons of topsoil that required misting with water every night to keep it from getting too dusty. Imagine the bacteria that collect in wet dirt heated by stage lights night after night. During the strike I got a sliver so tiny that I did not feel it go in. Following the strike I headed out on an extended weekend and while on a ferry headed to Vancouver Island I noticed a red, angry looking streak going up my arm from my wrist. As soon as the ferry docked I managed to get to a doctor who removed the sliver and prescribed antibiotics. The antibiotics didn’t work. A week later I was in the ER, septic from blood poisoning. I was in hospital for a day but it took me weeks to get healthy again. Ever since I have been a fanatic about protecting my hands, not only because they are my livelihood, but because they are in contact with so many hazards in any given day.
Communication and Training

Appendix Items:
• Health and Safety Orientations—Suggested Agenda Items for Performer, Shop Worker and Stage Crew Orientations
• Quick Reference Orientation Form for Workers/Health and Safety Notice Board
• Script for Acting Company Health and Safety Orientation—adapted from the Stratford Festival of Canada
• Emergency Contact Information and Medical Concerns Form Sample
• Reporting and Resolving Health and Safety Concerns Policy Sample

Glossary Items:
• Competent Worker
• Joint Health and Safety Committee (JHSC)

Communication with workers and worker training are important steps and ongoing processes in ensuring occupational health and safety awareness and performance. Clear and open communication and frequent training opportunities encourage everyone to support and participate in health and safety activities.

It is important to involve workers in decisions that may affect their well being and ensure they are prepared and equipped to manage occupational health and safety concerns. Generally, the workers actually doing the job are the most knowledgeable about the hazards they face and can articulate and develop the safest and most efficient work methods, and they are more likely to follow health and safety procedures when they have been involved in their development. If regular workers are using safe procedures, taking precautions, identifying potential hazards and attending training sessions, they will serve as role models to less experienced workers and automatically help to perpetuate health and safety awareness.

Communication Systems

Effective Health and Safety Management Systems rely on good communication—from both management and workers. Schedule regular health and safety meetings or check-ins, encourage workers to bring safety concerns to their supervisors, report on actions taken to address hazards, inform workers of planned changes that may affect health and safety, walk though the workplace together to identify to identify existing and potential hazards, etc.

It is important to be aware of, and to take into consideration, differing skills in language, literacy and culture when communicating health and safety information.

Health and Safety Orientations

At the beginning of each theatre season and/or production, companies should hold a Health and Safety Orientation and require all personnel to attend. Distribute health and safety information and cover the following topics:
• Health and Safety Policy
• procedures for reporting and resolving health and safety concerns
• procedures for reporting injuries and incidents
• location of first aid kits and names of trained first aiders
• emergency procedures
• location of the MSDS library
• location of personal protective equipment and other safety equipment/features

Safety Meetings

Safety Meetings are scheduled meetings—often held during pre-production—in which real and potential safety issues are discussed. They can stand alone, or take place during production, staff and/or board meetings. Many design, technical or performance hazards can be forestalled as a result of careful planning.

Safety Chats

Safety Chats are brief, informal meetings with the cast and crew that may be held at the start of a call, on the first day of rehearsal, on the first day onstage, the cue-to-cue day, etc. They are also held prior to rehearsing potentially hazardous sequences for the first time. Typical discussion topics include design hazards (raked stages, elevated surfaces, etc.), performance hazards (firearms, stage combat, special effects, etc.), reminders of emergency procedures, etc.

Joint Health and Safety Committees (JHSC)

Joint Health and Safety Committees are made up of equal parts management and worker representation. Members work together to identify and solve health and safety concerns, and generally promote health and safety awareness and interest within an organization. In Alberta, the establishment of a committee is voluntary, though many theatres find Joint Health and Safety Committees to be an essential and effective part of their Heath and Safety Management System.

Health and Safety Notice Boards

Health and Safety Notice Boards can be developed and displayed at your workplace in various locations to communicate information to large groups of people. 4’x8’ bulletin boards work well. Information to post may include:

• Health and Safety Policy
• OHS legislation
• location of first aid kits, names of trained first aiders, copies of first aid certificates
• location of the MSDS library
• emergency procedures
• location of personal protective equipment and other safety equipment/features
• local and time specific health and safety newsletters, bulletins, etc.
Callboards and Rehearsal Schedules

Callboards and rehearsal schedules are a great way to communicate important health and safety information to the cast and crew. Use the schedule to alert cast and crew members to potential hazards for that day’s rehearsal, such as the use of smoke, fog, pyrotechnics, firearms, etc.

Worker Training

Worker training is an essential component of a Health and Safety Management System. Workers need to know how to do their jobs safely and without risk to their health, and they must understand that the company considers health and safety to be an important part of the work process. Competent, well-trained workers not only perform their jobs safely, they are also more productive, aware and efficient.

It is not acceptable to assume workers have training, but it is possible to require them to participate in specific training at your workplace or have proof of prior training as a condition of employment. It is the employer’s responsibility to ensure worker competency. To this end, it is important to maintain training records showing what training workers have received and when, and when they are due for renewals/refreshers.

Specific health and safety training for each department, work site and procedure, based on identified hazards, should be arranged by employers at the beginning of each theatre season or prior to a worker’s first day of work, with refreshers held as required. This may include:

- new worker orientation
- tool and equipment training
- WHMIS training
- fall protection training
- respiratory protection training and fit-testing
- vehicle/forklift training
- first aid training
- emergency response/evacuation procedures
- fire extinguisher training

Specific requirements for worker training are identified throughout the OHS legislation.

Employers must ensure that a worker is trained in the safe operation of the equipment the worker is required to operate. This training must include:

- selection of the appropriate equipment
- limitations of the equipment
- operator’s pre-use inspection
• use of the equipment
• operator skills required by the manufacturer’s specifications for the equipment
• mechanical and maintenance requirements of the equipment
• loading and unloading the equipment if doing so is a job requirement
• the hazards specific to the operation of the equipment at the work site

If a worker may be exposed to a harmful substance at a work site, the employer must:
• establish procedures that minimize the worker’s exposure to the harmful substance
• ensure that a worker who may be exposed to the harmful substance is trained in the procedures, applies the training and is informed of the health hazards associated with exposure to the harmful substance

Workers must:
• participate in the training provided by an employer
• apply the training

Reference: OHS Regulation, Section 15

Additionally, if work is to be done that may endanger a worker, the employer must ensure that the work is done:
• by a worker who is competent to do the work or
• by a worker who is working under the direct supervision of a worker who is competent to do the work

Competent refers to a worker who is adequately qualified, suitably trained and has sufficient experience to carry out the work safely. A competent worker requires no supervision or only minimal supervision.

Reference: OHS Regulation, Section 13
Injuries and Incidents

Appendix Items:
- Legislated First Aid Requirements—Schedule 2 of OHS Code
- First Aid Record Completed Sample—AHRE
- Workers’ Compensation Board Report Form—WCB
- Injury and Illness Policy and Procedures—To Act In Safety, Theatre Ontario
- Injury and Illness Report—To Act In Safety, Theatre Ontario
- Ambulance Refusal Form—To Act In Safety, Theatre Ontario
- Incident Investigation Guide—AHRE
- Incident Investigation Report—AHRE

Glossary Items:
- Acute Illness or Injury
- First Aid
- First Aider
- Incident
- Near Miss

Safe Stages is designed to assist you in preventing injuries, illnesses and incidents at the workplace—and an essential part of this is planning and preparing for their occurrence as part of your Health and Safety Management System. This chapter outlines first aid requirements for Alberta workplaces and procedures for reporting and investigating injuries and incidents, including near misses.

First Aid

General worksite first aid requirements are outlined in Part 11 of the OHS Code. Worksite specific requirements, including the number of first aiders, level of first aid training and type and quantity of first aid kits, supplies and equipment, are listed in Schedule 2 of the OHS Code and are based on:

- how hazardous the work is
- the time taken to travel from the work site to a health care facility (hospital)
- the number of workers on each shift

Employers and workers who are likely to encounter an emergency situation should be trained in first aid. Training for supervisors in each department—as well as all Stage Management and Front of House workers who are interested—is recommended.

The benefits of first aid training go far beyond legal compliance—workers and volunteers are usually keen to take it and it is a great method for getting people involved with a Health and Safety Management System.

Employers are responsible for:
- Providing and maintaining first aid services, supplies and equipment
• Ensuring that the services, supplies and equipment are available and accessible during all working hours at the work site they serve
• Communicating information about first aid to workers
• Ensuring arrangements are in place to transport injured or ill workers from the work site to the nearest health care facility
• Ensuring that first aiders are trained
• Ensuring that injuries and acute illnesses are reported to the employer and recorded, and that records are kept confidential

Reference: OHS Code, Part 11 and Schedule 2

First aid kits must be available at all worksites and must comply with the regulations listed in the OHS Code. You can add additional supplies, such as gloves or a CPR mask, according to the needs at your worksite. Medications and ointments must not be included in first aid kits. It is helpful to put a laminated inventory on the lid of each kit, along with an inspection record that is signed and dated every three months when the kits are inspected. A list of trained first aiders must also be posted in a visible area.

The administering/dispensing of any drugs, including aspirin and other headache medication, is not considered first aid. Stage Managers should not stock such drugs in their stage management kit. Theatre companies should develop policies and procedures for assisting workers who require prescribed medications, such as epi-pens, nitro-glycerine pills, insulin, asthma inhalers, etc.

Theatre companies should also develop policies and procedures for calling ambulances and ambulance refusal. If an incident involves exposure to a chemical/hazardous substance and a worker is sent for medical care, the chemical’s Material Safety Data Sheet should accompany the worker.

First Aid Records

Workers must report any acute illness or injury at the worksite to their employer as soon as possible. Employers must record, on a first aid record, every acute illness or injury that occurs at the worksite as soon as possible after it is reported to them.

First aid records must contain:
• name of worker
• name and qualifications of the person giving first aid
• description of the illness or injury
• type of first aid given to the worker
• date and time of the illness or injury
• date and time the illness or injury was reported
• where at the work site the incident occurred
• work-related cause of the incident, if any
First aid records must be maintained for three years from the date of incident. The person assigned responsibility for custody of first aid records must ensure they are kept confidential. Access to first aid records is limited to the worker, occupational health and safety officers, Workplace Health and Safety’s Director of Medical Services or a person authorized by the Director of Medical Services, except where written permission of the worker is obtained.

### Reporting and Investigating Injuries and Incidents

The *OHS Act* requires serious workplace injuries and incidents to be reported to the Workplace Health and Safety Contact Centre: 1-866-415-8690 or 415-8690 in Edmonton.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Employers must report to Workplace Health and Safety:</th>
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<tr>
<td>• An injury or incident that results in a death</td>
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<tr>
<td>• An injury or incident that results in a worker being admitted to a hospital for more than 2 days</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• An unplanned or uncontrolled explosion, fire or flood that causes serious injury or that has the potential of causing a serious injury</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• The collapse or upset of a crane, derrick or hoist</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• The collapse or failure of any component of a building or structure necessary for the structural integrity of the building or structure</td>
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**Reference: OHS Act, Section 18**

The employer responsible for the work site is responsible for reporting the injury or incident. Report one of the above incidents immediately or at the first opportunity. Be prepared to provide information indicating the time, place and nature of the injury or incident. If you are unsure whether an injury will develop into a reportable injury, call it in.

Do not disturb the scene of an incident unless you:

- are permitted to do so by an occupational health and safety officer or a peace officer
- have to attend to someone who has been injured or killed
- have to prevent further injuries
- have to protect property that is endangered as a result of the incident

### Conducting an Incident Investigation

Following a telephone call to the Workplace Health and Safety Contact Centre, the employer responsible for the work site must prepare an Incident Investigation Report. An Incident Investigation Report explains what happened and what will be done to prevent a similar or identical incident from happening again. Witnesses and people involved in the incident may need to be interviewed, including those not present when the incident occurred. For example, it may be appropriate to interview a trainer who instructed involved workers months earlier.

The investigation must determine:

- WHO was involved or injured?
- WHERE the incident happened?
• WHEN did the incident occur?
• WHAT were the immediate and basic causes of the incident?
• WHY was the unsafe act, condition or procedure allowed?
• HOW can a similar incident be prevented?

Non-reportable injuries and incidents, including near misses, also need to be documented in an Incident Investigation Report, even if they are not reported to Workplace Health and Safety. Near misses should be investigated because they point to hazardous conditions or work practices that could cause an incident in the future.

Incident Investigation Reports should be kept on file for a period of two years following the injury or incident. You are not required to send copies to Workplace Health and Safety, but they must be readily available to occupational health and safety officers if and when they come to the work site.

Note: There are separate requirements for reporting injuries to the Worker’s Compensation Board. These are covered under the Worker’s Compensation Act, which is different from occupational health and safety legislation. The WCB injury report form must be completed by the employer and worker involved within 72 hours of the injury.
Emergency Response Planning

Appendix Items:
• Emergency Response Plan Completed Sample—AHRE
• Emergency Procedures Sample for Fire

Glossary Items:
• Emergency

Planning and preparing in advance for emergencies is important. Emergency response plans protect the health, safety and lives of people at your worksite, as well as minimize business losses related to damage to property and the environment.

There are many types of emergencies including but not limited to:
• fires
• spills
• critical injuries
• explosions
• medical emergencies
• transportation collisions
• power or fuel loss
• workplace violence
• bomb threats
• natural disasters such as storms, tornados and floods

Employers must establish a written emergency response plan in case of an emergency that may require rescue or evacuation. Workers who may be affected must be consulted in its development.

An emergency response plan must include:
• The identification of potential emergencies (based on hazard assessments)
• Procedures for dealing with the identified emergencies
• The identification of, location of and operational procedures for emergency equipment
• The emergency response training requirements
• The location and use of emergency facilities
• The fire protection requirements
• The alarm and emergency communication requirements
• The first aid services required
• Procedures for rescue and evacuation
• The designated rescue and evacuation workers

Additionally, an employer must:
• Designate the workers who will provide rescue services and supervise evacuation procedures in an emergency
• Ensure that designated rescue and emergency workers are trained in emergency response appropriate to the work site and the potential emergencies identified in the emergency
response plan
• Ensure the above training includes exercises appropriate to the work site that simulate the potential emergencies identified in the emergency response plan
• Ensure the above training exercises are repeated at the intervals required to ensure that the designated rescue and evacuation workers are competent to carry out their duties

Reference: OHS Code, Part 7

Theatre companies need detailed emergency response plans to ensure that all workers and patrons are safely and efficiently evacuated from a facility in the event of a fire or other emergency. All workers must know their roles and responsibilities in the event of such an emergency/evacuation. The plan should apply to all phases of a production, including performance. Annual improvements to and testing of the plan can and should be coordinated in partnership with the local fire department.

Training and orientation in the emergency response plan should be provided to all workers, even if they are only working in the facility for a short number of hours.

All venues should also have an “Emergency Contact List” posted throughout the facility.

Evacuation Procedures

Strategies for evacuating theatres in an orderly and controlled fashion include:

1. Ensuring your theatre has an operating fire alarm system that all workers understand.

2. Identifying the following information:
   • your theatre’s fire protection systems (e.g. automatic sprinkler systems and fire curtains)
   • location of fire extinguishers and the workers trained/designated to use them
   • location of fire/emergency exits throughout the theatre facility (evacuation routes must lead directly to the exterior of the facility and remain unobstructed)
   • emergency lighting or location of flashlights (should a power failure occur)
   • emergency power system (generator/battery system)
   • a meeting area for all evacuees

3. Supplementing the fire alarm with trained workers ready to act upon the theatre’s emergency procedures.

4. Identifying exits and providing targeted and timely evacuation instructions to patrons through a pre-recorded voice communication, public address or microphone system (provided the power is working).

5. Responding to the needs of all age groups and persons with disabilities.

6. Creating procedures for stopping a performance:
   • restoring the house lights and onstage work lights
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Chapter Seven: Emergency Response Planning

- silencing running sound cues
- removing scenery, furniture and props from under the fire curtain
- ensuring exits are clear of scenery that could interfere with the safe evacuation of the building
- securing any scenery in an unsafe condition
- closing the appropriate doors
- doing a head count at the meeting place of all workers to ensure all have safely evacuated
- determining and announcing when it is safe to return to the building

**Fire Extinguishers**

Fire departments as well as some fire extinguisher manufacturers can provide fire extinguisher training to workers. Only workers trained in the proper use of fire extinguishers should ever attempt to fight a fire. Training should involve both instruction and hands-on practice, culminating in putting out an actual (controlled) fire with a fire extinguisher. Training is recommended for front of house workers, stage management, technical directors, scenic and stage carpenters, props and wardrobe workers and all technicians.

There are different types of fire extinguishers for different types of fires. Multipurpose dry chemical ABC extinguishers will suffice for most theatres.

Fire extinguishers should be located throughout the theatre facility, close to potential fire hazards and where they can easily be reached while a fire is still small, but not where they could be a hazard to workers or where they could get damaged.

Fire extinguishers must be inspected according to manufacturer’s specifications.
Glossary

**Acute Illness or Injury**—A physical injury or sudden occurrence of an illness that results in the need for immediate care.

**AHRE** (Alberta Human Resources & Employment)—The government ministry responsible for the *Occupational Health and Safety Act*, *Regulation* and *Code*. Its job is to work with employers and workers to ensure legislation is followed as much as possible to prevent workplace incidents, injuries and illnesses, and to ensure employers and workers are educated in their occupational health and safety duties.

**Best Practice**—A best practice in health and safety is a program, process, strategy or activity that: has been shown to be effective in the prevention of workplace injury or illness; has been implemented, maintained and evaluated; is based on current information; and is of value to, or transferable to, other organizations. Best practices are living documents and must be reviewed and modified on a regular basis to assess their validity, accuracy and applicability. They may and often do exceed the requirements of OHS legislation.

**Competent Worker**—An adequately qualified, suitably trained person with sufficient experience to safely perform work without supervision.

**Due Diligence**—The level of judgment, care, prudence, determination and activity that a person would reasonably be expected to do under particular circumstances.

**Emergency**—Any situation or occurrence of a serious nature, developing suddenly and unexpectedly, and demanding immediate attention.

**Employer**—You are an employer if: you employ one or more workers; you are designated to represent an employer; your responsibility is to oversee workers’ health and safety; or you are self-employed.

**Equipment**—A thing used to equip workers at a work site; includes tools, supplies, machinery and sanitary facilities.

**First Aid**—The immediate and temporary care given to an injured or suddenly ill person at a work site using available equipment, supplies, facilities or services. First aid has three objectives: preserve life; prevent the injury or illness from becoming worse; promote recovery.

**First Aider (emergency, standard or advanced)**—A competent individual designated by an employer to provide first aid to workers at a work site.

**Hazard**—Any situation, condition or thing that may be dangerous to the safety or health of workers. There are four standard hazard categories: physical hazards; chemical hazards; biological hazards; and psychological hazards.
Hazard Assessment—Careful evaluation of all equipment, machinery, work areas and processes to identify potential sources of hazards that workers may be exposed to.

Hazard Control—Control measures implemented to eliminate or reduce the risk of harm to workers.

Illness—See Acute Illness or Injury.

Imminent Danger—Any danger that isn’t normal for a job, or any dangerous conditions under which a worker wouldn’t normally carry out their work. If workers think their work may put them or another worker in imminent danger, they must refuse to do it.

Incident—An undesired event that results in physical harm to a person or damage to property, including near misses.

Injury—See Acute Illness or Injury.

Joint Health and Safety Committee—A group of worker and employer representatives working together to identify and solve health and safety problems at the workplace. In Alberta, the establishment of a committee is voluntary, except for those workplaces required by Ministerial Order to have a committee.

Near Miss—An incident that did not cause visible injury or property damage but that could have resulted in serious injury, personal harm, death or property damage.

OHS Act—The Occupational Health and Safety Act sets out general requirements to ensure workplace conditions are safe and do not pose a danger of injury or illness. A general duty clause serves as a blanket statement that employers are accountable for the health and safety of workers.

OHS Code—The Occupational Health and Safety Code sets out specific health and safety requirements for work-related operations and practices within Alberta’s various industries to ensure that workplace conditions are safe and do not pose a danger of injury or illness.

OHS Regulation—The Occupational Health and Safety Regulation sets out requirements for specific workplace conditions and work practices that must be met in order for a workplace to be considered in compliance with OHS legislation.

Partnerships in Health and Safety—A voluntary Alberta program of Workplace Health and Safety based on the concept that when employers and workers build effective Health and Safety Management Systems the human and financial costs of workplace injuries and illnesses will be reduced.

Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)—Equipment or apparel that when worn lessens the potential harmful effects of a known hazard (i.e. gloves, hard hats, steel-toed footwear, etc.)
**Prime Contractor**—If there are two or more employers involved in work at a work site at the same time, there must be a **prime contractor**. The prime contractor for a work site is: the contractor, employer or other person who enters into an agreement with the owner of the work site to be the prime contractor; or if no agreement has been made or is in force, the owner of the work site.

**Reasonably Practicable**—A legally defined term that is assessed using the reasonable person test.

**Reasonable Person Test**—The assessment of what a dozen peers would consider reasonable in a similar set of circumstances, resulting in a balanced and wise judgment that could be defended to others.

**Safe Work Practice**—A written set of guidelines that establishes a standard of performance for an activity.

**Safe Work Procedure**—A written, step-by-step description of how to perform a task from beginning to end.

**Standards**—Standards are produced by voluntary organizations, such as the Canadian Standards Association (CSA), American National Standards Institute (ANSI) and the International Organization for Standardization (ISO). Standards do not have the power of law. However, if they are adopted by legislation, they become part of the law and are enforceable. For example, if the *OHS Code* states that workers must wear footwear approved to a particular CSA standard, then the CSA standard has the power of law.

**WHMIS** (Workplace Hazardous Materials Information System)—A comprehensive plan for providing information on the safe use of hazardous materials in Canadian workplaces. The information is provided by means of: product labels; Material Safety Data Sheets (MSDS); and worker education programs.

**Worker**—A person engaged in an occupation, including managers, supervisors and volunteers.

**Workplace Health and Safety (WHS)**—A division/department of Alberta Human Resources and Employment.