

adc theatre
stage manager's
standard practices

2021 edition

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Introduction

To assist with the production risk assessment process, this document contains completed risk assessments for common stage activities, such as those asked about in Section 4. The mitigations produced by these risk assessments are known as **Standard Practice**. Instead of completing a new risk assessment for these common activities, parts of the Production Documentation can instead reference the standard practice risk assessments here. This is prompted on certain items throughout the Production Documentation via tickboxes, but can also be referenced in the 'Additional Risk Assessment' tables. **Referencing a Standard Practice commits a production to following all the mitigations specified by that standard practice.**

Standard Practices are considered to be the minimum safety requirement; additional safety checks and precautions are always welcome.

Any activities that produce hazards that are not specified within a Standard Practice risk assessment require an Additional Risk Assessment. These should take the same form as the risk assessment tables below and specify what hazards are produced, and how they will be mitigated. There are dedicated tables within the Production Documentation to assist with this process, though risk assessments can be added as separate sheets into the folder if preferred.

1. Rehearsal/Performance Safety

This section includes any complex scene changes or other points of the performance where a combination of factors puts actors or crew at unusual risk.

1.1 Bare Feet Standard Practice

Please note that socks or tights counts as bare feet.

Risk	Mitigation
<p>Bare feet coming in to contact with sharp objects – screws, edges of staging etc, or at speed (stubbing toes)</p> <p>Injury from anything shoes would normally protect against such as moving scenery.</p> <p>Other building users being unaware of the plan, moving around the building at speed with heavy shoes on.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A clearly defined area shall be maintained as free-of-hazards by the production. A member of the production team shall be nominated as responsible for this. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The area shall be swept and mopped every day before people are allowed in it in bare feet. ○ The area shall have all remaining hazards clearly marked (stage weights and bracing on masking for example). ○ Note that making this area smaller than ‘all of stage’ may be problematic as there is nothing to stop people walking out of the area. ○ Note that it’s essential to include other areas such as the OP Quad, Juliettes and orchestra pit if they are used in the production. • The risk assessment for props and set in use shall take in to account the vulnerability of people with bare feet. • The area where bare feet are allowed shall be clearly defined. This shall generally be a smaller area than is maintained free of hazards to allow for people wandering around. The SM should emphasise all remaining hazards as marked out during their safety walk around. • When bare feet allowed shall be clearly defined. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The designated person shall arrive and prepare the areas defined above ready for this time. Once the area is prepared a sign stating such should be displayed. ○ Note that it should be made clear that it is not possible rehearse with bare feet before this time.
<p>Persons in bare feet wandering off around other areas of the building (particularly the auditorium and dressing room stairs).</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Under no circumstances shall people with bare feet be in the yard, scene dock & workshop, offices or front of house. • Areas where people are likely to not wear shoes (whether instructed to or not) shall also be kept clean – specifically the dressing rooms and the staircase to stage shall be vacuumed daily.
<p>Other building users can leave hazards in areas that are ‘clean’ during a performance, that are not necessarily easy to spot.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Control of the space – other people use the building during the day, particularly rehearsals and crucially, the Lateshow on a Wednesday who will be building and installing their set. It is imperative that they are notified at an early stage of the requirements to keep areas clear and free of hazards.

1.2 Smoking Standard Practice

Risk	Mitigation
Respiratory issues caused by long-term smoking Respiratory issues caused by passive smoking	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Permission to smoke is only granted for the moment taking place on-stage. Smoking in the wings or in any other area of the building is not permitted. Actors are not allowed to smoke during any of the rehearsals; only in the moment itself. • Warning notices stating that smoking is taking place in the show will be on display on the ADC website and on signs in the foyer, so that any audience member who do not wish to be in the auditorium for smoking can choose not to see the show.
Fire caused by match or lighter Fire caused by lit cigarette	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Only safety matches are permitted to be used on-stage. All lighters must be self-extinguishing. • For the duration of the on-stage smoking, a Stage Manager or Assistant Stage Manager must be in the wing with a fire extinguisher, ready to go on-stage if there is a fire. • An ashtray must be available near the smoking scene so that the cigarette is immediately extinguished after use.

1.3 Naked Flame Standard Practice

Risk	Mitigation
Fire spreading into auditorium	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stage and auditorium separated by metal first doors and metal fire safety curtain. Metal fire doors automatically close and should not be wedged open. • Stage Manager trained in use of safety curtain and instructed to let it in if onstage naked flame catches or acts differently to as planned and rehearsed • Naked flame never to pass in front of the safety curtain • The stage has multiple manual call points to trigger the fire alarm. In case of unexpected fire activity, one should immediately be pressed and the Duty Manager, a member of management or the Stage Manager should lead an evacuation.
Set, props or cloths catching on fire	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Any cloths or props (except costumes) used near a naked flame must be flame-checked. This delays them catching and gives attendants with fire extinguishers time to extinguish the flame. • Set surrounding larger flame effects should, as far as practically possible, be constructed from non-flammable materials, e.g. metal. • Two members of the cast or stage management team must be stationed at either side of the stage for the full duration of any naked flame. They must be familiar with the use of fire extinguishers and must be briefed by the theatre management if not.
Costume catching on fire	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Any costumes used near naked flames to be assessed and approved by the production or technical manager in the course of signing off the show documentation. • Costumes should not have dangling fabric that could come into contact with flame. • Fire blankets provided on both sides of stage for extinguishing flaming costumes. The Stage Manager should be familiar in the use of fire blankets, if not they should consult Theatre Management.
Fire due to lighter malfunction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Only safety matches and gas lighters should be used to light flame. • Any gas lighters used should be of a design which will automatically extinguish when dropped, i.e. 'Zippo' type lighters may not be used.
Wax from candles on stage floor	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • When using candles, any wax that has spilt onto stage must be removed in the get-out and measures should be taken during rehearsals and performances to minimise the amount of wax spilled.

1.4 Blank Firing Gun Standard Practice

The blank firing gun is a stock item of the ADC Theatre which recreates the effect of a gunshot by firing a blank pellet. Anyone wishing to use the gun should get in touch with the Production Manager to arrange training.

Risk	Mitigation
<p>The gun is fired outside of the action of the production</p> <p>The gun is fired by someone not involved in the production</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Only sufficient ammunition as is required for the action of the play shall be available during each performance. • One trained person shall be made responsible for the loading, unloading and safe-keeping of the weapons and spare ammunition when not in use. • Any ammunition released will be signed for, and spent cartridges shall be returned by the appointed person at the end of the performance. • All guns and ammunition must be kept on the Theatre premises unless prior permission has been formally granted by the Theatre and the City Council. • The weapon shall be unloaded and placed in secure storage when not in use during the performance. Outside of performances, it should be returned to the management team and stored in a locked container in a locked room.
<p>The firing of the gun results in the harm of another member of the production</p> <p>The firing of the gun results in the harm of a member of the audience</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Production Manager will train an appointed production team member (usually the Stage Manager) and any actors using the gun before their first use. The gun and ammunition for each performance will only be released into the care of this appointed person. • A demonstration of any discharge must be carried out in the technical rehearsal with all members of the cast and crew present. Any issues with proximity to the effects should be resolved immediately at this point. • Anyone in close proximity to a discharge should have appropriate hearing protection (ear defenders or ear plugs).

1.5 Other Weapons Standard Practice

This includes guns which are not fired, i.e. replicas.

Risk	Mitigation
<p>The production involves a fight scene which uses weapons</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Where weapons are to be used during the action of the play, their use shall be strictly limited to choreographed and well-rehearsed moves. • Any production which involves a fight scene should include a fight call as part of their pre-show checks. • Weapons shall only be used as strictly necessary for the performance of the play. • There shall be no sharp edges on items such as knives or swords – items used in fight scenes etc. shall be stage knives produced by a professional armourer that have never been sharp.
<p>Sharpened blades pose a hazard to performers</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Swords shall remain in their scabbards at all times when not in use. • Swords with sharp edges or points shall not be used for action. Points shall be suitably guarded. • Blunting a real knife for use on stage in any way shall not be permitted.
<p>Replica weapons are mistaken for real weapons and/or removed from the premises</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All weapons should be stored in the SM secure box when not in use during the performance, or with the management team outside of the performance.

2. Audience Interaction

If audience members are being invited onto the stage they are vulnerable to all the risks that cast members are, and will not have been briefed by the Stage Manager. The risk mitigation that applies to the cast isn't applicable so an additional risk assessment will need to be carried out.

2.1 Entrances, Exits & Movement through the Auditorium

Risk	Mitigation
Cast moving through the Auditorium could trip over audience members or their belongings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> FOH Stewards for performances in which cast move through the Auditorium shall be briefed by the Stage Manager to look out for obstructions across the aisles. If a significant obstruction is created by an audience member then the Stewards shall move it or ask the audience member to move it before the scene where cast enter the Auditorium. For exceptionally risky sequences in the Auditorium, use of the Houselights shall be considered.
Cast in the auditorium could inadvertently injure members of the audience	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> If the cast are moving rapidly through the Auditorium then they shall rehearse at length in the Auditorium space so they are familiar with the layout and where audience members will be. No fight sequences shall be choreographed in the Auditorium without an additional risk assessment.
Audience members could be injured by props carried by the cast into the Auditorium	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No props that contain liquid or are liable to shatter shall be taken into the Auditorium. No weapons, including plastic knives and blank-firing guns shall be taken into the auditorium.
Steps from the Auditorium to the stage or props left in the auditorium could block the fire passage in the Auditorium and limit the evacuation of the public in the case of a fire members	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> In cases where steps are required, seat A1 shall be removed to allow sufficient room in the fire passage. Steps shall only be allowed on the far OP side of the forestage, adjacent to the wall. No props shall be left in the Auditorium without an additional risk assessment

2.2 Items Passed to Audience Members

Risk	Mitigation
Audience members could be injured by objects being thrown at them from the stage or auditorium (e.g. sweets)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Objects being thrown into the audience shall not be sharp. Anything to be thrown into the audience shall be small and light and must be approved with the Theatre Management. Where possible, sweets thrown to the audience shall be soft.
Audience members could catch an illness from sweets thrown to them from the stage	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All sweets that are distributed to the audience shall be individually wrapped, and kept in a sealed container between performances.

3. Stage Manager's Checklist

In this section of the Production Risk Assessment the Stage Manager should record everything that needs to be in place before each rehearsal and performance can start.

This should include any mitigation steps worked out in previous sections of the Risk Assessment. For example, sweeping and mopping the stage should be recorded if bare feet are used in the production.

The Stage Manager should also divide tasks between the Stage Management Team. For example, the DSM might take responsibility for the Fire Check while an ASM checks that props are set correctly.

4. Props

Props can also be hazardous; for example, they may be flammable, or be able to break and injure performers or the audience. Below is a collection of standard risk assessments for Props; these should be referenced when filling in the Props part of Section 4, and any exceptions or differences specific to your production should be noted. For example:

Item	Material & Construction	Risks (e.g. shatters, flammable, contains liquid)	Mitigation
Newspaper	Paper	Flammable	Flamechecked prior to tech rehearsal
Wineglass	Glass, Coloured Water	Shatters, contains liquid	Small amount of liquid, mopping possible in the next black out. Not used on the forestage, and all performers wear shoes, so not covered with clingfilm.

4.1 Glass / Crockery on Stage

Risk	Mitigation
Broken glass on stage is a hazard which could cause harm to actors or technicians. If glass breaks near the edge of the stage, it could also harm the audience.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Where possible plastic replacements shall be found for any glass/crockery props. • Glass or crockery shall be completely wrapped in cling film or sticky-backed plastic to contain all pieces of broken material should the prop shatter. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Note that there are cases where it may be allowed unwrapped. • No glass or crockery shall be allowed on stage unwrapped where any actor has any part of bare skin touching the stage in the same scene (e.g. bare feet). • No glass or crockery shall be broken deliberately on stage as part of the action of the play: sugar-glass can be purchased for this purpose. • No unwrapped glass or crockery shall be carried in front of the line of the safety curtain during the action of the play. • No unwrapped glass or crockery shall be carried onto any raised part of the stage.

4.2 Liquids

Risk	Mitigation
<p>Liquid spillages make the surface of the stage slippery, increasing the risk of actors falling over, especially during action sequences.</p> <p>Liquids could be flammable.</p> <p>Liquids could short electrical equipment, and increase the likelihood of electric shocks.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Any props containing liquids (which should never be flammable) shall be kept well away from any electrical equipment on stage. • All spillages shall be mopped up at the earliest opportunity to avoid injury.

4.3 Sharp Edges

Risk	Mitigation
Sharp edges are a risk to actors using the prop, as well as other actors they may be interacting with, e.g. in a fight scene.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• There shall be no sharp edges on items such as knives or swords. Items used in fight scenes etc. shall be stage knives produced by a professional armourer that have never been sharp.• If the blade needs to be functional, the use of them throughout the performance shall require an additional risk assessment.
Wooden Props may splinter.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Wooden props shall be checked for splinters and sanded as necessary.

4.4 Flammability

Risk	Mitigation
Props made of flammable material, for example, paper, would burn fiercely if ignited, increasing the likelihood of a fire during a performance.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• All paper and other flammable materials which will be put down on the stage shall be sprayed with Flamecheck (available from Management and charged as sundries). Items through which the spray will not penetrate shall be soaked in the liquid.<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Note that hand props that are not put down on stage and are otherwise kept on a props table away from sources of ignition and under supervision may be allowed to not be flamechecked.○ Note that items which come into extended contact with skin or those which contain items for consumption should not be flamechecked.• Items of furniture brought into the theatre, e.g. sofas, beds, shall be adequately flame retardant.• Any props, such as flaming torches, which inherently involve a naked flame should comply with the special permissions form (Health and Safety Policy Appendix 8b) and will need to be separately risk assessed and discussed with the Technical Manager.

4.5 Structure

Risk	Mitigation
Props that are intended to support weight (e.g. an actor) collapse, causing injury	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• All props which bear any weight must be well and structurally constructed and not liable to cause any injury.• All props which are intended to support an actor's weight shall be tested by a member of Theatre Management as part of the stage sign-off.