

Live Performance Advisory Committee Guidelines

Props, costumes, and make-up

Overview

This guideline covers the safety precautions employers and workers should take when using and handling props, costumes and make-up during rehearsal and performance.

Using props, costumes and make-up as part of a live performance presents hazards, such as tripping hazards or allergic reactions. While there are no special regulations for the use of props, costumes and make-up in a live performance production, the *Occupational Health and Safety Act* (<https://www.ontario.ca/laws/statute/90o01>) and its regulations apply. Other legislation may also apply.

We developed this guideline to help employers and workers:

- understand and assess some of the risks
- plan their use so that props (both hand props and food props), costumes and make-up can be used safely in live performance productions

This resource does not replace the *Occupational Health and Safety Act* (OHSA) and its regulations and should not be used as or considered legal advice. Health and safety

inspectors apply and enforce these laws based on the facts they find in the workplace.

This guideline does not cover

- weaponry used in live performance

For information on special requirements for weaponry of any sort used in live performance, please refer to the Stage combat/stunts and weaponry guideline (<https://www.ontario.ca/document/safety-guidelines-live-performance-industry/stage-combatstunts-and-weaponry>) .

Terms used in this guideline

This guideline uses several industry-specific terms. These definitions are provided for clarity and guidance only and, unless otherwise noted, are not definitions found under the *Occupational Health and Safety Act* (<https://www.ontario.ca/laws/statute/90o01>) or its regulations.

The first appearance of each term is linked to a definition.

Anaphylaxis — a severe allergic reaction which can result in death. Symptoms include:

- hives
- itching and flushed skin
- sudden low blood pressure
- constriction of airways
- swollen tongue or throat
- weak and rapid pulse
- nausea, vomiting or diarrhea
- dizziness or fainting

Authority having jurisdiction (AHJ) — an organization, office, or individual responsible for enforcing a code or standard, or for approving equipment, materials,

an installation, or a procedure.

Costume — any article, including footwear, masks, wigs and headgear, that is worn — not carried or handled — by the performer. This includes any weapon (firearm or blade) that is worn, but not handled or used.

Fire retardant — a substance that helps to delay or prevent combustion. In general, fire retardants reduce the flammability of materials by either:

- blocking the fire physically
- initiating a chemical reaction that stops the fire

Flame-resistant — the characteristic of any material that can prevent it from igniting. Flame resistance works regardless of whether the source of ignition is flaming or non-flaming, and whether the source of ignition remains in place or is removed.

Since no material can be made “fireproof,” the term should not be used as it gives a false sense of security.

Hand prop — any article that is carried or handled, not worn, by the performer. This includes any weapon (firearm or blade) that is handled or used.

Rights and duties

The main purpose of the *Occupational Health and Safety Act* (OHSA) is to protect workers from health and safety hazards on the job. It sets out duties for all workplace parties, including **employers** and **supervisors**, as well as both duties and rights for **workers**. All workplace parties must know their general and specific rights and duties (<https://www.ontario.ca/document/guide-occupational-health-and-safety-act/part-iii-duties-employers-and-other-persons>) under the OHSA for creating, participating in, and maintaining safe workplaces. In addition, all workplace parties should make themselves familiar with the material contained in this guideline.

Event planning

The safety of the public, performers and production workers is most important in all live performance events that involve working in dark or dimly-lit conditions. Employers have a duty to take every precaution reasonable in the circumstances for the protection of a worker (clause 25(2)(h) of the OHSA) and to provide information, instruction and supervision to a worker to protect the health or safety of the worker (Clause 25(2)(a) of the OHSA). That's why the following should be carried out:

- Conduct a risk assessment as part of the event planning.
- Choose products and processes appropriate to the desired effect, but having the lowest risk level.
- Make sure everything is safe and all participants know what to expect before a rehearsal or performance, including adequate training and rehearsal.
- Make sure that props, costumes and make-up are used safely during a rehearsal or performance.

Risk assessment

For a general overview of the risk assessment process, refer to Risk Assessment for Productions – Safety Guidelines for the Live Performance Industry in Ontario (<https://www.ontario.ca/document/safety-guidelines-live-performance-industry/risk-assessment-productions>) .

Areas of concern and risks to be assessed for the use of props, costumes and make-up include the following.

Solvents

Many materials used in the construction or treatment of hand props and costumes rely on volatile solvents (such as acetone, alcohol and petroleum-based) for their application.

Hazardous materials, such as dyes, paints, and adhesives that contain volatile solvents should be avoided, if possible. For example, shoe colour spray should be avoided because the ingredients and the propellant combine to create a hazard.

Where it is necessary to use such materials, personal protective equipment such as gloves and respirators must be worn, as required. Requirements are in the Safety Data

Sheet (SDS) for each product. For example, a respirator should be worn during the application of acetone to strip the original colour when re-dyeing shoes.

Where it is necessary to use paints, dyes, adhesives or other materials that contain volatile solvents, allow the solvent to evaporate completely before the costume or prop is used by crew or performers.

If possible, use water-based stain and make-up removers for cleaning, rather than volatile solvents. If volatile solvents must be used in cleaning, allow the solvent to evaporate fully before the article is used by wardrobe crew and performers.

Flame effects

Because of the inherent danger of working with live flame, alternatives to flame effects should always be used wherever possible. The use of flame effects (including torches, candles, and fireplaces) should take place under strictly controlled conditions. Refer to the Ontario Fire Code (O. Reg. 213/07 (<https://www.ontario.ca/laws/regulation/070213>), clauses 2.3.2.1 and 2.3.2.2) and the Flame effects guideline (<https://www.ontario.ca/document/safety-guidelines-live-performance-industry/flame-effects>).

Take these precautions when using flame effects:

- Where live flame is used, hand props and costumes placed, used or worn near flame should be made of flame-resistant material or treated with fire retardant.
- Any trim or decoration to a costume after treatment with fire retardant should also be made of flame-resistant materials or be treated with fire retardant.
- Make sure that any costume item that has been washed or cleaned is re-treated with fire retardant.
- Check with the Authority Having Jurisdiction (AHJ) on the amount of time any prop or costume should be required to withstand exposure to open flame.
- Make sure all workers handling products that will be used to generate a live flame have WHMIS training.

Face powder/talcum

Use of face powder or talcum powder can cause eye irritation or a burning sensation in the throat. If inhaled, the powders can lead to serious lung problems. Avoid creating

clouds of face powder or talcum.

Allergens

Allergens in fabric, make-up or food may cause an immune system reaction, from a mild itchy rash when in contact with skin, to anaphylaxis when swallowed.

Performers should inform the company as soon as possible about any allergies or adverse physical reactions to make-up ingredients, latex or other materials.

Those portions of props or costumes which are likely to come in direct contact with the performer's skin should be free of materials or finishes which could cause allergic reaction, injury or harm.

It is important to note any food allergies for individuals handling and/or consuming food props.

Integration with other production elements

Consider how costumes, hand props and make-up may interact with other production elements, such as lighting, scenery and sound. Where any of these may combine to create a safety hazard, controls must be put in place to make sure the performer's mobility, vision and hearing are not obstructed. These precautions should be taken before the elements are included in rehearsal.

Training and information

Items constructed for a production should not be used without referring to and following the maker's instructions for care and maintenance.

Performers should be given adequate instruction and rehearsal time to become accustomed to all props and costumes as they will be used in combination with scenery, lighting and other production elements, including scene changes, costume quick changes and stage fight sequences.

Safe work plan

Safe work plans create a structured approach to workplace health and safety through each stage of a production by applying the results obtained through:

- risk assessment
- training and other information
- setting out the general and specific obligations under the *Occupational Health and Safety Act* (<https://www.ontario.ca/laws/statute/90o01>)

The safety of the performers and others who handle props, costumes and make-up should be considered in all stages of their design, purchase, construction, repair, maintenance and use.

Before rehearsals

Costumes

- The age, size and physical fitness of the performer should be considered in all stages of design, purchase, construction and use of hand props and costumes.
- Within the reasonable bounds of period, style and character, costumes should be designed, constructed and fitted so as not to impede performer movement while on or off stage.
- Those responsible for constructing costumes should be informed as soon as possible about special movement required of a performer so that these movements may be anticipated in the construction and fit of the costume.
- During fittings, performers should be encouraged to consider and demonstrate their anticipated range of staged movement in each costume.
- All aspects of costumes should be fitted to avoid injury or unnecessary discomfort. Costumes, including masks, wigs and headgear should:
 - provide a field of vision adequate for safe movement on and off stage
 - not obstruct the performer's breathing or hearing
 - be fitted and balanced to prevent headaches, neck or back strain
- The combination of performer footwear and playing surface should provide the degree of traction necessary for the safe execution of the performance.

- Used footwear and hat bands should be wiped with a disinfectant cloth before they are tried on in fittings.

Props

- Hand props should be designed, chosen and built with consideration for their specific use on stage.
- They should be checked for rough edges, chips, loose material or other potential hazards before being given to the performers.

During rehearsals or performances

- Performers should inform their supervisor (for example, stage manager) as soon as possible about any allergies or adverse physical reactions to food, hand props, costume and make-up materials.
- Hand props and costumes should be checked regularly for wear or damage, and repaired or replaced when necessary.

Props

- Performers should be informed of any changes made to a hand prop already in use and be given adequate time to work with the changed article before use in run-throughs or in performance.
- Any addition or change in stage business that involves the use of hand props should be rehearsed with the props before it is included in the performance.

Food props

- Make sure individuals responsible for preparation of food props follow appropriate protocol for hand hygiene. Hands should be washed with soap and water. If possible, disposable food-grade gloves should be worn when handling food.
- Make sure all surfaces used for food preparation are clean and clear of any non-food prop objects.
- When real food and fake food are combined in a prop, make sure fake food props are washable and separated to prevent cross-contamination.

- All consumables should be stored in the appropriate areas — perishables in a refrigerated container, non-perishables in cupboards specifically designated for food.
- All glassware, dishware, cutlery, carving/paring knives and other kitchen implements should be washed and put away as soon as possible after use.
- Make sure food is stored and consumed at the correct temperature to ensure food safety. If necessary, keep chilled or heated until such time as it can be served and eaten.
- Note any food allergies for individuals handling or consuming food props.

Costumes

- Performers should inform those responsible for props or costumes of any repairs needed to maintain the safety of the prop or costume.
- Rehearsal costumes and props should be provided wherever practicable, except where the costume style would be normal modern dress, and should be as close as possible in size, weight and shape to the intended performance article.
- Rehearsal garments should be cleaned following the rehearsal period before storage or re-use.
- Costume elements worn next to the skin should be cleaned, washed or dry cleaned frequently. Other costume elements, including wigs, masks and headgear, should be cleaned, washed or dry cleaned as necessary.
- Make sure that any item that has been treated with fire retardant is re-treated after being washed or cleaned.
- Non-scented detergents and fabric softeners should be used for the comfort of both those handling the costumes when cleaning, maintaining or repairing and the performers wearing them.
- Inside hat bands should be wiped daily with a disinfectant cloth.

Make-up

- Performers should use only cosmetic products on their skin, not paints, dyes, or other non-cosmetic substances.

- When providing special make-up such as body make-up or stage blood, the employer should make sure such material has the ingredients labelled. Products without an ingredient list should not be used.
- Performers should inform the company as soon as possible about any allergies or adverse physical reactions to make-up ingredients, latex, etc.

- Body make-up, special effects make-up and new products should be skin tested before full application.
- If any make-up causes a skin reaction, its use should be discontinued and a substitute found.
- Frequency of use (number of dress rehearsals and performances) and duration of use (a single scene or the full performance) should be considered when choosing make-up.
- Make-up should be used only as directed. For example, face make-up should not be used as eye make-up.
- Anyone applying make-up should wash hands before and after application. Make-up artists should wash their hands before they start on each performer. They should either discard sponges and brushes or wash them before using them on the next performer.
- If the performer's skin appears to be broken, gloves should be worn by the person applying the make-up.
- Performers should never lend their make-up to anyone, or borrow or accept used make-up, particularly mascara and foundation.
- Aerosol sprays or airbrush products should be used only in dressing rooms or make-up rooms with good local ventilation to remove overspray.
- Cosmetics should be replaced regularly. Expired products should be discarded.
- Make-up and hair products should not be shared.
- Brushes and pencils should be moistened with clean tap water, not saliva.
- Performers and make-up artists should avoid eating or drinking while make-up is being applied.
- When removing spirit gum, latex, etc., performers should avoid prolonged skin contact with solvents like acetone, which dry out the skin. Lost skin oils and

moisture should be replaced as soon as possible.

End of run and loadout

- Costumes should be cleaned at the end of a run before storage.
 - Footwear and inside hat bands should be disinfected at the end of a run, whether the item is headed to immediate re-use or to storage.
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Previous (<https://www.ontario.ca/document/safety-guidelines-live-performance-industry/fog-and-smoke>)

Next (<https://www.ontario.ca/document/safety-guidelines-live-performance-industry/mechanised-scenery-and-automated-systems>)

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