



Each year, United Educators receives a number of claims arising from theater productions. Falls from stages, injuries from props, and fires are just some of the perils. Yet, with proper planning, your institution can enhance theater production safety.

## **Production Planning**

Once a production is chosen, take time to assess its risks and the theater's physical space. Consider these actions:

- Review the script and production notes to determine if any pyrotechnics, special effects (for example, a fog machine or lasers), or dangerous props (such as swords or fly riggings) will be used. Determine whether their use requires a permit from the fire marshal or special permission from the theater.
- Create pre- and post-production safety checklists, examples of which can be found in the resources below. Using these encourages assessment of potentially hazardous conditions, such as spilled liquid, props that may

become tripping hazards, improperly maintained stair treads, or unsecured lighting or ladders.

- Confirm that set builders have been properly trained in equipment or power tool use. Provide personal protective equipment for all participants in construction and rigging activities.
- If the production uses open flames or pyrotechnics, determine whether there is adequate fire protection, including the need for a fire curtain, and confirm the location and operability of fire extinguishers. Create a fire safety and evacuation plan for backstage.

## **Set Construction**

As set construction begins, the production supervisor should be prepared to:

- Confirm that all props and decorations are made from a commercial noncombustible material or treated with an appropriate flame retardant
- Store all sets, props, and costumes securely and away from sprinklers and heating units
- Monitor and enforce the use of protective gear, such as goggles or gloves—particularly when creating or moving set components and decorations
- Use proper lifting techniques, hand trucks, or carts when moving heavy items
- Secure electrical and extension cords to avoid tripping hazards
- Secure and inspect all lighting riggings
- Keep walkways and all exits clear of set materials and props
- Create a plan to properly disassemble and dispose of sets and construction materials when no longer needed

## **Performances**

Safety checks and risk avoidance should also be integrated into the performance.

Consider whether:

- Someone has reviewed stage directions and clearly marked for the performers stage edges, stairs, orchestra pits, and trap doors.

- Stage weapons are securely stored when not in use.
- Performers are engaging in appropriate warm-ups and cool-downs for their performances to avoid personal injury.
- Adequate hydration is available for performers and the theater is maintained at an appropriate temperature.
- Makeup kits are provided for each performer and are clearly labeled with the performer's name to avoid contamination. Confirm that props and other costumes are cleaned or disinfected after each performance.

Taking simple steps can ensure that institution performances are safe, exciting, and enjoyable experiences.

## Resources

[Princeton University Theater Safety Resources](#)

[University of North Florida Theater Safety Checklist](#)

[Prince William County Public Schools Theater Safety Manual](#)

[Arts, Crafts and Theater Safety Organization](#)

[Safety & Security: K-12 Theater and Auditorium Safety Requirements](#)

[Hind Ley College \(UK\) Theater Risk Assessment Checklist](#)

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[https://www.ue.org/risk-management/insights-blog/?id=2786&utm\\_source=SilverpopMailing&utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_campaign=Prospect\\_Email\\_4-14-16\\_Final&utm\\_content=&spMailingID=14233019&spUserID=Mjl3MDgyMTE3MDES1&spJobID=761055766&spReportId=NzYxM DU1NzY2SO](https://www.ue.org/risk-management/insights-blog/?id=2786&utm_source=SilverpopMailing&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=Prospect_Email_4-14-16_Final&utm_content=&spMailingID=14233019&spUserID=Mjl3MDgyMTE3MDES1&spJobID=761055766&spReportId=NzYxM DU1NzY2SO)