

Stage Combat, Stunts and Weaponry

INFORMATION SHEET #9



Following the guidance in this information sheet is not compulsory, unless specifically stated, and you are free to take other action. If you follow the guidance you will normally be doing enough to comply with WorkSafeBC regulations.

OVERVIEW

This information sheet is intended to provide recommendations and guidelines on the safety of stage combat and stunts, as well as the safe handling, use, and storage of weapons. Stunts are actions that require skill or daring, and combat means fighting. Weapons are items designed to inflict damage or physical harm.

HOW TO STAGE COMBAT/STUNTS

All stage combats and stunts should be choreographed or arranged by a Fight/Stunt Director who has specific knowledge of the requested type of stunt.

- Ensure your stage combat props are purpose-made — *always*.
- Ensure that there is adequate time for the Fight/Stunt Director to consult on the design of the physical elements (scenery, props, costumes, and weapons) of the production.
- The Fight/Stunt Director should always consider the physical limitations, training and skills of the artists.

When a Fight/Stunt Director is not engaged for the duration of the production, a person who is familiar with the stunt/combat actions should be chosen to observe and consult with the Fight/Stunt Director during rehearsals on all aspects of the fight/stunt. Also, they should conduct and monitor all run-throughs of the fights/stunts before each performance.

- Fights and stunts should have adequate rehearsal time — using an increasing scale of speed and complexity (i.e., 25%, 50%, 75%).
- Rehearsal time should be made in consultation with the Fight/Stunt Director.
- The actual weapons(s), prop(s), costume(s), footwear and stunt equipment used should be available to all performers to allow for adequate rehearsal time.

Stunts and fights should not be performed or rehearsed in temperatures and weather conditions that compromise on safety. Rehearsal rooms should have enough space for the safe performance of scenes. Appropriate first aid equipment must be accessible, including ice packs.



SAFETY PRACTICE

There should be a person with an appropriate level of first aid training present at all fight rehearsals and performances. Everyone should know who makes the phone call in the case of an emergency. During fights/stunts, visibility and visual perception shall be adequate to ensure the safety of the performers. The floor surface should be free of debris and allow for secure footing for the performers.

The risk of repetitive strain and bruise injuries should be minimized, if not eliminated. Individuals have varying response to repetitive or awkward motion and may not be aware of the hazard they face — if you see a hazard, report it.



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HOW TO USE WEAPONS – GENERAL

All weapons are dangerous. Never indulge in horseplay while in possession of any weapon.

Only weapons specifically made and designed for stage combat or approved by the Fight Director should be used. Ornamental (costume), antique or ceremonial weapons shall not be acceptable. Confirm this on the property list before putting items into use.

The Fight Director should be responsible for determining the safety of all weapons. In the absence of the Fight Director, the weapons handler should be responsible.

The only people to handle the weapon(s) shall be the Weapons Handler or assistant(s), and the performer who uses it.

- Working relationship between roles (i.e., Fight Director and Weapons Handler) should be in the working agreement.
- The Weapons Handler should maintain all weapons in safe working order, and replace them if they are deemed no longer safe for use.
- The Weapons Handler may designate any necessary assistants and should be given adequate time to familiarize them with the procedures they must follow.

There should be a fight run-through on the day of each performance.



HOW TO USE WEAPONS – BLADED

Fight directors should be responsible for the selection of weapons. All weapons should have their points made safe and their blades properly balanced. All weapon handles should provide a secure hold under fight conditions.

Retractable and non-retractable weapons should be set out separately and be clearly marked so that one cannot be mistaken for the other.

Each actor should use the same weapon in all performances and pre-performance run-throughs. Performers should check their own weapons before each performance in the presence of the Weapons Handler.

Ensure that only props specially designed for stage combat or those items approved by a Fight Director are the only items in use.

HOW TO USE WEAPONS – FIREARMS

Refer to [Performing Arts Safety Information Sheet #8: Safety With Firearms](#).

SAFETY PRACTICE

All weapons shall be secured when not in use. Keep inventory and know where every weapon is located, this should be more formal for schools and municipal recreation centres for example. Lock up securement whenever able.

