

3.10.02: Technical Section – Backstage Good Practice/Safety:

This document acts as both a good practice guide and the basis of a Health and Safety briefing for every visiting company. These briefings (Toolbox Talk) will be given by the Duty Stage Technician for each company's initial arrival.

This document is sent in advance to each company but does not replace the Toolbox Talk.

1. Fire precautions

- DO NOT cover any smoke detectors when using stage smoke – speak to theatre tech staff to see if the relevant detector is switched to “heat only”
- DO NOT prop any fire door open for any reason – if the door needs holding open get someone else to hold it for you temporarily.

Alarm

- When there is no performance in either venue – the alarm bells ring.
- When there is a performance in either venue - notification is via voice announcements over emergency Voice Alarm system.
- Please follow the instructions of the Duty Stage Technician when evacuating the backstage areas during either type of alarm.

Emergency Exit doors

Main Stage & Backstage areas	SL & SR Staircases
Main Auditorium	Main Foyer
Studio Backstage	Backstage corridor by toilets
Studio Stage/Auditorium:	Auditorium side door
Workshop, Scenedock & No.1 Dressing Room	Workshop Loading Bay

Assembly point for all cast & crew in both theatres is the Patio area opposite the workshop loading bay.

2. First Aid

All first aid incidents MUST be reported to either the Duty Manager or the Duty Stage Technician.

There should always be at least one Chelmsford Theatres Technician on duty who is a qualified first aider.

The Duty Managers are all first aiders as well.

Primary first aid boxes are in:

For backstage areas - Theatre Workshop (by sink)

For front of house areas - Box Office

3. Security/Access

There are 3 security pass doors to which you will be given the same code – it is up to your company to decide how to use them:

- Main House Foyer - by disabled toilet
- Main House Stage Door - SR emergency exit
- Main House Bar - by Female Toilet (only available when bar open)

Wheelchair Access

Studio - All areas accessible via pass door from Main Foyer.

Main House - Stage/Scene dock/Workshop are only areas accessible and are via pass door from Main Foyer, then wheelchair stair lift in storage area between both theatres (known as the tunnel).

4. Dressing Room/Toilet Facilities

Chelmsford Theatre has 3 dressing rooms:

- | | | |
|------------|---|--|
| No. 1 | - | Next to stage (off Scene dock), down 3 steps, one large mirror, sink, toilet & shower. |
| No. 2 | - | Below stage, each divided into 3 bays (each with 6 mirrors) + multiple separate sinks (with mirrors) & 1 shower |
| No. 3 | - | Toilets are in adjacent corridor |
| Green Room | - | Although not designated as permanent Dressing Room this has an area that can be curtained off for extra changing space |

Chelmsford Theatre Studio has 2 dressing rooms:

- | | | |
|-------|---|---|
| No. 4 | - | Single rooms, each with 12 mirrors/places |
| No. 5 | - | |

5. Show Work/General Guidelines

- **DO NOT RUN BACKSTAGE!**
- Please clear up any spillages quickly.
- If involved in scene changes during blackouts it is useful to close your eyes just before the lights go out so they will become accustomed to the dark quicker and easier.
- Speak quietly during the performance whenever near stage.
- Do not attempt to cross the stage unless you are taking a known safe route or are involved in a scene change.
- Never move any flying bars unless you have been trained to do so.
- For more detail see NOP no. 41 – Hemp & Counterweight flying
- If you are working on the stage floor & hear the shout of “heads” then IMMEDIATELY check above for descending item.
- Learn where cloths are coming in during rehearsals, then in performance move out of their way as soon as black-out is established

6. Working in Low Light

Please remember that the backstage area, especially around the stage itself, is likely to be frequently subjected to very low light levels. For this reason, it is **essential** that trip hazards and higher obstructions are made as safe as possible.

To this end all cables run across the floor should be kept as close as possible to walls/furniture/scenery. Whenever they cross open floor, they should be stuck down either individually, in groups or if a lot of cables are used, rubber matting should be used to cover them (this is in turn stuck down). Please use 2" tape (either gaffer or PVC) or larger to stick cable/matting down.

Any scenery which is not being moved during a performance that uses braces and weights positioned near entrances and exits should be marked in several ways.

- Floor around weights / bottom of brace should be marked with white tape on the floor around it.
- Edge of brace should be marked with white tape.
- The top weight of any weights used should be one of those painted or otherwise marked white ie. using gaffa tape.

No cables should have to cross the path of a stage truck (wheeled rostra). They should be rigged overhead above the level of any scenery moved, then dropped back down to the desired location.

Loudspeakers used on stage often have to be near entrances so make sure they are positioned as close to the back of the scenery (or wall) as possible – if sticking out, mark floor as above

7. Carrying Scenery etc

- When carrying flattage with another person make sure you use opposite hands to one another – one hand as high & one as low as you can comfortably reach.

- The person at the front of a piece of scenery being carried (by two) will often have to walk backwards – so be especially careful of looking where you are going.

8. When lifting/carrying heavy items:

- Never lift more than you can comfortably pick up.
- If you are unsure of the correct lifting technique (full squat or semi squat methods) please speak to the full-time technical staff for further guidance.
- Always try to lift the object as close to your torso as possible.
- Don't be afraid to ask for help if something is too heavy.
- If two or more of you are lifting something together one of you must take the lead instructing the other when to raise/lower the load.
- Check the route you are going to take is clear of obstructions and/or trip hazards
- Bear in mind with very heavy loads that adding more people to the lift doesn't increase the group lifting capacity proportional to the number lifting it (see tech staff for further info).
- Pushing/pulling wheeled loads – apply same principles as above **plus**:
 - If possible, push rather than pull object
 - Keep your arms bent, get your chest/torso as close to load as possible & push mainly with your legs
 - DO NOT push a load by bending over at the waist with your arms outstretched.

9. House Tabs/Safety Curtain

Our House Tabs are of the vertical raise/lower variety.

Immediately behind our House Tabs is the Safety Curtain (The Iron).

The Iron does not need to be shown to the audience during a performance (it's purely for emergency use) – however non-moveable items **MUST NOT** be left under the Iron during a performance.

The Iron should only be operated by theatre staff and will be accompanied by the call "Iron coming in".

10. Orchestra Pit

If the orchestra pit is in use extra care is required to minimise the risk of performers falling off the stage into the pit, especially with any show including dance.

- The front edge of the stage should be marked with an unbroken line of light/contrasting coloured tape – this to be done before any rehearsal takes place
- Initially rehearsals should be conducted with enough light to easily see the white line across the front of the stage, to allow the cast to familiarise themselves with its location.
- Any stage moves, but particularly dance, should be plotted allowing for the close proximity of the fall hazard that the orchestra pit represents.

11. Rostra

- It is recommended that any rostra 0.75m (2.5ft) or higher should have some form of safety rail/barrier along its back edge to prevent accidental falls.
- Whilst not all hired sets may come with these features, serious consideration should be given to achieve such a barrier.
- If the theatres stage staff are not convinced suitable precautions have been taken in such circumstances, they have the authority to refuse personnel access to the relevant structure.
- If using rostra, familiarise yourself with their positions, edges & (if used) handrails while under working light **BEFORE** you use them under stage lighting conditions.