

Introduction

This guide exists to help those bringing a show to the Dunedin Fringe Festival to understand their obligations to the health and safety of everyone involved in their show. While the Dunedin Arts Trust is here to support you and your show, you are ultimately responsible for taking care of your cast, crew and audience members.

Legislation

Workplace health and safety is written into New Zealand law and covers all staff, cast, crew and audiences that you will interact with as part of your Dunedin Fringe show.

As a 'duty holder' you need to comply with the requirements outlined in the Health and Safety at Work Act 2015. You have a duty to protect the health and safety of yourself and others and to take appropriate steps to eliminate or minimise workplace risks.

For more information on Health and Safety legislation in New Zealand, see the [Worksafe New Zealand Website](#)

Show producers, Venue Managers & Building Owners

You should have an understanding of where responsibility typically lies in terms of health and safety in your venue.

Building owners are responsible for the basic safety of the building. They need to make sure that the fabric of the building is maintained and primary safety considerations such as fire escapes, alarms and evacuation plans are in place.

A venue manager will typically be leasing from an owner or subletting from the lease holder for the duration of the fringe. A venue manager needs to make sure that the activities they plan are safe and not infringing on the overall safety of the building.

If you are not managing your own venue, you may only need to plan the safety of your show. However, if you are renting a space and turning into a makeshift venue for your own show, you will likely be acting as a venue manager and will need to consider all aspects of venue safety as part of your plans.

To find out more about being a venue manager, please download the *Venue Manager Guide* which is available on the website and within Eventotron.

Risk assessments

One of the best ways to start thinking about safety and how to reduce the chance of an accident is to do a risk assessment for your show.

There are many ways of laying out a risk assessment, but the basic premise is the same:

Identify hazards and who might be at risk	Rate the hazard by severity & likelihood to determine the risk	If the risk is too high, detail ways that you can reduce likelihood and/or severity	With the controls in place, again rate the risk by severity & likelihood	Document who is responsible for monitoring
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Common hazards might include burns or smoke inhalation, electrocution, injuries from slips, trips and falls, back injuries from manual handling. However, every show and venue is different. Take some time to think about your show and make a list of everything that could go wrong, from there you can start your risk assessment.

There are many guides and templates available online but for a straightforward template you can download the one that the Dunedin Fringe uses from here – [Dunedin Fringe Risk Assessment Template](#). If you require help with your risk assessment, email operations@dunedinfringe.nz.

Emergency Procedures

If the worst happens and there's an emergency, everyone working in the venue needs to know what the plan is, and what they need to do. This includes you, your crew, your cast members and anyone else working for your show.

Ideally, your venue manager will have written emergency procedures and given you a copy. For example, if a fire alarm goes off during your show, you and your cast should know how to react and can help with the evacuation of your audience.

You should know what the emergency procedures are for a fire, an earthquake, a medical emergency or a violent person.

Fire Safety

Of the possible emergencies that can happen in a venue, fire is the one that has the potential to be the most dangerous.

Building owners are required to have a number of safety features in a venue specifically to deal with fire;

- There should be written emergency procedures and a fire evacuation plan and these should be displayed.
- There should be routinely scheduled fire alarm tests and drills.
- Emergency exits should be clearly marked and accessible.
- Fire protection systems must be functional and maintained as required including appropriate fire extinguishers. This should also include adequate training in their use.
- Combustibles, waste materials and rubbish should be stored in approved containers or disposed of properly.

When thinking about fire safety in terms of your own show, you should consider the following;

- If your show has naked flames such as candles, make sure the venue manager is aware, you have included it in your risk assessment and sufficient controls are in place for its safe use.
- Any kind of pyrotechnic can present significant risk and will likely need careful consideration and collaboration between yourself, the venue manager and advice from professional practitioners.
- All fabrics used on scenery/props should be flame retarded. Chemicals can be used to fire-retard materials and can be bought as a pre-made mixture.
- Any electrical equipment that you bring into the venue should be tagged and tested to reduce the chance of electrical fires.

Conduct and Well-being

The well-being of everyone involved in the activities of the Dunedin Fringe Arts Trust is extremely important. Likewise, the way we behave to others is crucial to ensure everyone involved feels safe and respected at all times.

Here are some excerpts from the Fringe Festival's Code of Conduct which may help you plan something similar for your group;

- Treat all people you encounter with respect and courtesy
- Do not discriminate against anyone including on the grounds of: ethnicity, sexuality, gender identity, marital or domestic status, disability, pregnancy or breast feeding, age
- Be polite and friendly when dealing with the public – you are the 'public face of the event
- Dress appropriately for the event you are helping with – especially whenever you are in public view
- Be aware of safety procedures in your location! Ask questions of the artist, venue, or Fringe staff if you are uncertain how to ensure the safety and wellbeing of your audience. Be ready to use safety procedures if required
- Act ethically, with honesty and integrity, in the best interests of the Dunedin Fringe Arts Trust and the Dunedin Fringe Festival at all times
- Keep any confidential information private in accordance with the Privacy Act 14

Health and Safety Checklist

What follows are a number of points that are specific to venue and theatre safety. These can help you identify issues to include in your risk assessment. Use this list to check that you're covering all the bases.

The basics

- Cabling is safely secured to the floor to avoid trip hazards
- Staff and crew know where the emergency exits are
- Staff and crew know what your venues emergency procedures are
- Staff and crew know where the firefighting equipment is kept
- Lights safely managed and secured by a designated person
- Electrical outlets are safe and working

Lighting & Equipment

- Rigging safely managed and secured by a designated person
- Props safely managed and secured by a designated person
- The stage lights are properly focused, and rigged
- There is adequate working light backstage
- There are audience warnings when using strobe lighting
- Electrical equipment has been tagged and tested for safety

Stairs & Entrances

- Stage entrances and exits are clear of rubbish and obstructions
- Treads and backstage stairs maintained in good condition
- Stairwells are properly lit
- Entrances well-lit and free of obstacles

First Aid/Medical

- There are adequate first aid kits available
- They are accessible and clearly marked
- Your group knows what to do in an emergency or medical event

Useful links

Worksafe is New Zealand's primary workplace health and safety regulator. They have good website with lots of useful information, guides and tools.

[Worksafe New Zealand Website](#)

Dunedin City Council is the local authority and can help advise on licensing, building compliance and general enquiries.

[Dunedin City Council Website](#)

Entertainment Technology New Zealand (ETNZ) was established by a group of industry professionals to bring together and support all (technical) persons involved in the entertainment industry.

ETNZ have also produced a guide to safe working practices for the theatre and entertainment industry which is definitely worth looking at for further information and good practice regarding health and safety.

[ETNZ Website](#)

[ETNZ guide to safe working practices for the theatre and entertainment industry](#)

Finally

If you require any additional Health and Safety support, advice or just want to talk things through, don't hesitate to get in touch. The Dunedin Fringe Operations Manager can be contacted by emailing operations@dunedinfringe.nz or calling us on +64 3 477 3350.