

General obligations concerning occupational health and safety

Costumes and Props

Wearing, using, handling and making costumes and props may entail some health and safety risks.

Identified Risks and Risk Factors

- Musculoskeletal problems
- Allergies
- Hygiene problems
- Blood circulation problems
- Hot flashes
- Burns
- Trouble accessing places and emergency exits
- Falls
- Injuries
- Sensitivity
- Intoxication
- Skin respiration problems
- Restricted field of vision
- Dehydration
- Thermal stress
- Fire

Employers and Workers Involved

This information sheet is for producers (employers), performers (actors, singers, dancers, variety artists, understudies, extras, stunt performers, etc.), hairdressers and workers who make, design, adjust or handle costumes and props (artistic designers, props supervisors, costume masters, costume designers, wardrobe masters, dressers, chief prop makers, prop makers, prop masters, set prop people, outdoor prop makers, technicians, etc.).

Definitions

Costume: What a performer is wearing, including but not limited to clothing, hats, wigs, belts or shoes.

Props: What a performer is handling, such as but not limited to a bladed weapon, a firearm, a suitcase, skates, gloves with crampons, a small furniture item, a vase, a radio, a pack of cigarettes (for weapons, see Information Sheet 17).



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Preventive Measures

PREPRODUCTION STAGE

Design, Creation, Fitting and Adjustment

1. Assess the characteristics of the cloth, materials or products used, to protect the health and safety of the users:
 - 1.1. Do not use toxic cloth, materials or products that are likely to decompose or be inhaled and that will exceed the allowable exposure levels described in the regulations.
 - 1.2. Ensure that anyone who works with a controlled product or who is likely to come into contact with such a product has taken the Workplace Hazardous Materials Information System course (WHMIS 2015), as required by the *Act Respecting Occupational Health and Safety*.
 - 1.3. Use cloth, materials or products that allow the skin to breathe or the air to circulate freely. If this recommendation cannot be followed (e.g., use of plastic or latex costumes), the employer should plan for adequate safety measures in terms of maximum exposure time to the materials, required breaks and appropriate hydration.
 - 1.4. Reduce the weight of the costumes and props as much as possible. If this recommendation cannot be followed, the employer should plan a work calendar and filming schedule with adequate breaks and take any other measures to reduce the risk of musculoskeletal problems.
2. For performers wearing a costume that presents a risk of musculoskeletal problems, plan to have the support staff required to help them put on or take off the costume for meals, breaks and when there is enough time between scenes.
3. Plan to have fitting sessions for any costume that presents a risk of musculoskeletal problems or other health and safety risks for the performer wearing it (e.g., costumes that are heavy or bulky or reduce visibility) to allow for personal adjustments.
4. Ensure that performers who wear costumes and use props have the required training when their usual task does not involve the risks related to their use.
5. When there may be a risk of fire, ensure that costumes and props are flameproofed in compliance with the applicable standards and regulations (National Fire Code, etc.).
6. Choose alternatives to open flame. When an open flame is absolutely required, the costumes and props placed or used near the flame must be made of inflammable material or treated with a flameproof product that meets the applicable standards and regulations (National Fire Code, etc.) (see Information Sheet 4 – *Fire Prevention*).
7. Ensure that costumes and props (e.g., masks) that are likely to come into contact with the performers cause no allergies or sensitivities.
8. Ensure that costumes do not limit the performers' access to filming locations or emergency exits and that measures are taken to reduce the risk of falling. When necessary, costumes should be made in separate pieces or be detachable.



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9. Ensure that all helmets and masks allow wearers to breathe freely.
10. Adjust costumes so as not to hinder blood circulation or breathing, especially for corsets and other rigid garments.
11. Ensure that props are designed, chosen or made to take into account the planned use in the scene.
12. Avoid costumes, props, helmets and masks that reduce the field of vision. Also ensure that helmets with visors have an adequate field of vision. If this recommendation cannot be followed, the employer must take the necessary steps to protect the health and safety of the performer.
13. Ensure that all helmets or safety equipment required for the performance are certified or compliant with current safety standards (e.g., bicycle helmet, hockey helmet, safety helmet, climbing harness). If this recommendation cannot be followed, the employer must take the necessary steps to protect the health and safety of the performer.
14. Have all costumes or props used in stunts approved by the stunt coordinator and the stunt performer (see Information Sheet 18 – *Stunts*).
15. Before handing out costumes and props, ensure they will not expose the wearers or users to injury (e.g., rough or chipped edges, components liable to detach).
16. Design the costume to allow the performers to meet their basic needs (e.g., eat, rest, hygiene).
17. Adapt all prop prostheses (e.g., dental prosthesis, knee or arm prosthesis) and contact lenses to the performer who will wear them.

Rehearsal

18. When required, plan for an adaptation period (e.g., rehearsals) for performers who will wear costumes that may cause musculoskeletal problems or other health and safety risks (e.g., a heavy or bulky costume or one with reduced visibility) to ensure they are at ease with the costume during filming and therefore at less risk of an accident.
19. As much as possible, have the chief dresser, dresser, wardrobe master or other costume person check whether the performers are having any undesirable reactions. The performers should inform the chief dresser, dresser, wardrobe master or other costume person of their symptoms. The person informed should follow up to determine the nature and origin of the undesirable physical reactions or discomfort to determine whether there is a risk of injury or lesion. If there is a risk, the employer must take the necessary steps to relieve the performer or immediately eliminate the source of the problem. If the symptoms persist after the changes or adjustments, a health care professional must be consulted.
20. Use items or props replicas that are safe and light when scenes have to be rehearsed for a long period. When the size, shape or weight of a prop used in filming is different from the replica used in the rehearsal, plan for a transition and familiarization period for the performer before filming. Moreover, in general, dangerous props should only be used in close-ups.
21. Inform the user of any change made to a prop or script that entails a new risk, in order to plan for a period of adjustment to the change, when necessary.

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PRODUCTION STAGE

Filming

22. Clean costumes that are worn directly against the skin after each use when possible. Other costume articles and props may be cleaned frequently or when there is a new user.
23. Take all required measures to avoid the risks of thermal stress (heat) or thermal environment (cold) (e.g., air conditioning, ventilation or heat, warm clothing).
24. Ensure that performers inform the employer's representative immediately of any discomfort that could lead to a risk of injury or lesion caused by a prosthesis, costume or prop so the situation can be corrected. The employer's representative shall call on a specialist or other appropriate expert to make the required changes.

Note: See Information Sheet 20 – *Makeup and Hair*. Sections 6 and 9, as well as sections 5 and 6 of the Appendix, may apply to the use of costumes, props, prostheses and body makeup that may constitute a costume.

References

National Fire Code, National Research Council of Canada, 2015.

Information Sheet 4 on Fire Prevention.

Information Sheet 17 on Firearms.

Information Sheet 18 on Stunts.

Information Sheet 20 on Makeup and Hair.

Act Respecting Occupational Health and Safety, CQLR, chapter S-2.1.

Regulation respecting occupational health and safety, CQLR, chapter S-2.1, r. 13.

CNESST Répertoire Toxicologique, [<http://www.reptox.csst.qc.ca>].

Written by the Technical Committee of the film and video industry's joint sector-based working group

- International Alliance of Theatrical Stage Employees, Moving Picture Technicians, Artists and Allied Crafts of the United States, Its Territories and Canada (IATSE), local 514
- International Alliance of Theatrical Stage Employees, Moving Picture Technicians, Artists and Allied Crafts of the United States, Its Territories and Canada (IATSE), local 667
- Alliance of Canadian Cinema Television & Radio Artists (ACTRA)
- Alliance québécoise des techniciens de l'image et du son (AQTIS)
- Association québécoise de la production médiatique (AQPM)
- Directors Guild of Canada Conseil du Québec (DGC - Québec)
- Union des artistes (UDA)
- Commission de la santé et de la sécurité du travail (CSST)

The information contained in this Guideline does not replace current standards, laws and regulations.