

Theatre Production Guidelines

Building stage props can provide students with a valuable work experience and reduce the production costs for your school district. However, care must be taken to provide students with the necessary training and appropriate equipment to do the job safely. Failure to do so creates liability exposure for your school district and increases the frequency and severity of student injuries.

Students in theater scene shops may use a variety of inherently dangerous equipment while building theater props. Some of the more commonly used woodworking equipment includes table saws, chop saws, electric sanders, drills, drill presses, and routers. Sometimes, drama students use welders (both arc and acetylene), glass cutting torches, spray-booth painting, and metalworking equipment. In addition, students involved in setting up the stage sets face hazards related to heavy lifting and the use of pallet carts and ladders. Students in these classes use or are exposed to hazardous substances, some which are highly flammable, including compressed gas, greases, oils, solvents, oil-based paint, and spray paint.

Drama scene shops must meet the same standards of care as Career Technical Education.

- The Department of Labor and Industries' *Non-Agricultural Prohibited Occupation Standards for Minors* (WAC 296-125-030) prohibit any child under the age of 18 from working in woodworking and metalworking occupations involving powered equipment due to the inherently dangerous work environment. An exception is made for students who are enrolled in bona fide vocational education programs, recognizing the increased supervision and training of the child in a school setting.

All facilities and equipment must meet safety codes established by various agencies, including OSPI and the Department of Labor and Industries (L&I). Washington State's Career and Technical Education Standards requires instructors to be vocationally certified in the areas they teach and to be able to demonstrate proficiency in instruction of safety and hygiene pertinent to their respective courses following Department of Labor and Industries standards.

- The Department of Labor and Industries has very specific safety and health regulations governing powered machinery and wood and metals shops, as well as specific training requirements. These safety regulations were developed as a result of studies on shop injuries suffered in the workplace. Vocational Education/Technical Trades classes require both written tests and skills documentation before a student is allowed to use the equipment. All powered machinery must have adequate guards and safety signs in place.
- All students must wear appropriate personal protective equipment particular to the machine being used (e.g., eye shields, goggles, face shields, gloves, aprons, etc.). These shop classes have regular inspections and maintenance of their shop equipment to ensure safety compliance. Career Technical Education teachers have been trained to recognize the need for increased supervision while students are using inherently dangerous equipment.

If a student is injured and the shop is out of compliance in any of the areas discussed above, your school district could be sued for negligence and suffer serious financial consequences. It will be difficult to provide an affirmative defense for your district if these recognized standards of care have not been met.

Students are not your only concern. Employees have a right to a safe work environment. Your district is subject to DOSH inspections. Noncompliance with DOSH regulations can result in severe financial penalties.

The following loss control recommendations can help your district control the hazards and resulting losses associated with theater set production.

LOSS CONTROL RECOMMENDATIONS

- Require a vocationally certified teacher to supervise students using powered machinery.
- Require the teacher to have demonstrable proficiency in safety and hygiene.
- Require the teacher to have a valid CPR/First Aid card.
- Require students to take written safety tests and skills tests. Require students to score 100% before using any powered machinery.
- Provide appropriate guards for all powered machinery.
- Install non-slip surfacing around all powered machinery.
- Anchor all fixed power machinery to the floor or counter to prevent the walking into or tipping of the equipment.
- Paint safety zones in yellow at least 4 feet in diameter around each piece of equipment.
- Post safety warning signs on or in close proximity to all powered machinery.
- Provide and require to be worn personal protective equipment (PPE) for all processes requiring them.
- Reduce build-up of flammable materials through good housekeeping practices.
- Store all flammable products appropriately in a flammable storage cabinet.
- Mount fire extinguishers in highly visible locations for use in case of emergency.
- Have a wool fire blanket available in case of emergency.
- Have first aid kits and other emergency supplies readily available in case of emergency.
- Store all potentially hazardous products appropriately.
- Dispose of all hazardous wastes, such as paint thinner, etc., in compliance with Department of Ecology regulations.
- Inspect all shops on a regular basis; document the results.
- Perform preventative maintenance on all powered machinery annually.

If you have any further questions regarding Theater Production Shop Safety, please call your WSRMP Loss Control Consultant.