

Buildings used for locations or temporary studios in film and television

HSE information sheet

Entertainment Information Sheet No 18

Introduction

This information sheet is one of a series produced by the Joint Advisory Committee for Entertainments (JACE). It gives specific guidance on the control of risks arising from the use of existing buildings by the film and television industries as locations or temporary studios which were not designed for that purpose.

It is aimed at employers including production companies, freelancers and others in control of the way buildings and studios are used during the production of film or television productions. Employees and others who may be exposed to risks to their health and safety from the buildings or their contents will also find it useful. It also provides information which may be relevant to the temporary use of buildings for theatrical performances. It does not deal with permanent studios or locations. More guidance is available on many of the topics covered (see Further reading).

In this information sheet, 'must' is used only where there is an explicit legal requirement to take a certain action, 'should' is used to indicate what to do to comply with the law – although dutyholders are free to take other action if that would result in compliance.

What the law says

The Health and Safety at Work etc Act 1974 (the HSW Act) requires employers to take reasonably practicable steps to ensure the health and safety of all employees and anyone else who may be affected by their work. This will include affected freelance staff and members of the public.

Other legislation will apply depending on the work being carried out during the production. For instance, the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999 build on the requirements in the HSW Act and require dutyholders to assess and control risks.

If any changes or additions are being made to any part of the existing structure, or if new structures are being created during use of the building, the Construction (Design and Management) Regulations 2015 (CDM) will also apply (see Further reading).

Roles and responsibilities

The legal duties for health and safety rest with the employer. This normally means the production company. On a day-to-day basis, the overall responsibility for ensuring that the appropriate standards of health and safety are achieved and maintained throughout the production process normally rests with the producer.

In this information sheet, the term producer is used to represent the person in overall control of the production activity.

The landlord of the building has legal duties to make sure that access to the building and all plant and equipment within it are safe and without risks to health and safety.

The landlord should work closely with the producer to enable them to use the building safely. Both parties must ensure the appropriate information is exchanged, including, where appropriate, plans, drawings, operating manuals for equipment, arrangements for isolating electrical and gas supplies, asbestos registers, emergency procedures, information about the state of repair of the building and equipment etc.

Contractors and specialists such as stunt performers, riggers, SFX, gaffers etc must take the condition and nature of the building into account when planning their work. They should ensure they liaise closely with the producer and landlord to make sure they have all the necessary information to be able to work safely.

Hazards

Buildings may have been designed for other functions and the production may not have exclusive use of the building or the surrounding land. Some buildings may be derelict or in poor repair. The use of buildings for location work or studios may involve risks for the people on the production, other unconnected users of the building or others.

An early recce is important to identify hazards and to decide upon plans to control them. Early exchange of information with the landlord will allow decisions to be made about whether the production can be made safely. The level of work required to make a location safe should be one of the factors you use when selecting a production location. Hazards that may be encountered in buildings that are little used, in poor condition or not designed for use as sets or studios include:

- walls, floors and ceilings in poor condition and with the potential to collapse;
- badly maintained floors with slippery surfaces and holes etc;
- absence of handrails on stairs and balconies or guarding at roof edges;
- conditions likely to increase the chance of fires from cooking, SFX, hot work during construction, hot or poorly maintained electrical equipment;
- absent or inadequate fire precautions such as fire alarms and fire detection systems;
- poor access and means of escape;
- unguarded, faulty, obsolete or derelict machinery;
- poor or unsafe water, gas or electrical supplies;
- confined spaces including basements and cellars;
- asbestos in poor condition and other hazardous substances;
- debris and litter;
- pests or vermin;
- absence of basic amenities such as heating, lighting, ventilation, toilets;
- additional hazards introduced by the production's activities.

Risk assessment

The producer in control of broadcast or film production work must make sure risks arising from the work are controlled. To do this they must think about what things in the workplace might cause harm

to people and take such steps as are necessary to eliminate or reduce the risk to acceptable levels.

This process is known as risk assessment and it is something required by law. If there are fewer than five employees it does not have to be written down.

The risks to people from working in temporary locations must be assessed and controlled in the same way as any other risk to the health and safety of those involved in film and broadcasting. The risk assessment must be reviewed, as necessary, in light of new information and as the situation changes. This process is sometimes called dynamic risk assessment.

The risk assessment will inform discussions about how to proceed with the production, what controls must be put in place and whether and how changes to those controls should be made to ensure safety.

Risk management

Competence

The nature of film and TV productions means that the buildings used will vary in size, condition and the level of hazard contained in them. Those in control of the production must ensure they use people that are competent to assess the building in accordance with what they intend to do, and plan appropriately.

All personnel on site, whether working on the production or otherwise, are to be fully briefed as to the risks and control measures that must be put in place to make sure people cannot enter unsafe areas.

Expert assistance should be sought whenever necessary to ensure control measures are appropriate, eg structural engineering.

The following are examples of risk control measures. The list is by no means exhaustive and circumstances will dictate which other measures are necessary.

Walls, floors and ceilings with the potential to collapse

- Obtain and act on the results of a structural survey.
- Arrange for repairs if possible.
- Securely cordon off areas which you will not be using and leave a margin for safety in case of structural collapse.

Holes in floors

- Use expert help to make sure the holes are not part of a wider structural problem with the floor.
- Arrange for repairs in the first instance and, if this is not reasonably practicable, clearly identify and securely cordon off the area and advise staff.

Absence of adequate handrails on stairs and balconies or guarding at roof edges

- Repair or install temporary handrails or securely cordon off the stairs if they are not to be used.
- Guard roof edges if people are likely to be working near them or securely cordon them off.

Fire precautions, alarms, fire detection systems and firefighting

- Keep areas clean, tidy and clear of combustible materials so far as reasonably practicable.
- Ensure fixed location electrical supply and equipment is either safe or isolated.
- Ensure production electrical equipment is safe and is appropriate for the conditions in the building.
- Temporary heaters should be positioned away from any flammable material and turned off when not attended.
- Site rules should include procedures for hot working (cutting, welding, grinding) during set and strike.
- Smoking rules must be enforced and safe areas designated for smoking if required.
- Check that fire alarms work and arrange tests weekly while on location. For complicated buildings arrange drills and identify people to supervise evacuation.
- If no fire alarm system exists in the building, a system must be put in place to warn people of a fire. This is commonly done by using manual bells that can be heard all over the building.
- Arrange for inspection and test of fire detection systems.
- Provide fire extinguishers appropriate to the materials/hazards, eg electricity, and make sure people know how to use them.
- Check fire exit signage and escape routes regularly to take into account any changes the production is making to the building.
- Identify fire doors and ensure that they are kept closed and in good repair.

- Put in place and practise an emergency procedure covering fire alarm, evacuation, checking that the building is empty and calling fire brigade.

Poor access and means of escape

- Identify and use suitable access and egress routes to get people and equipment into and out of the building.
- Regularly check escape routes to make sure they remain clear of obstruction and that no doors or exit routes are locked.
- Ensure suitable routes are available to allow disabled people to evacuate the building safely.
- Make arrangements for the evacuation of any audience, including any vulnerable members.

Unguarded, faulty, obsolete or derelict machinery

- Faulty or derelict lifts and shafts should be locked off and any open doors securely cordoned off.
- Other equipment or machinery should be locked off, otherwise disabled or securely cordoned off.

Poor or unsafe water, gas or electrical supply

- Water supply should be tested for hygiene. If it cannot be guaranteed, temporary supplies (bottled or bowser) should be provided.
- Fixed or temporary gas supplies should be inspected, tested and installed by a person registered with Gas Safe.
- Any fixed electrical supply should be tested by a competent person prior to use.
- Temporary electrical supplies should conform to British Standard (BS) 7909 – 'Temporary electrical supplies in the entertainment industry'.

Confined spaces including basements and cellars

- Restrict and manage access to cellars and other confined spaces where good escape routes are not available.
- Care must be taken to ensure exhaust fumes, toxic or suffocating gases cannot pool in cellars or other areas where people may be.

Asbestos and other hazardous substances

- Obtain the asbestos register/survey for the building from the landlord. Check this against asbestos found during any reconnaissance visits.
- Asbestos in poor condition or which may be disturbed by the production should be removed or made safe by a licensed contractor.
- Mark any easily accessible asbestos.
- Brief electricians, riggers, carpenters on the location of asbestos and what precautions they are to take if they have to work on or near it.
- Identify and remove or isolate other hazardous materials (eg fuel stores, chemicals).

Debris, litter and vermin

- Remove rubbish, debris, bird and animal droppings prior to using the location.
- Expert assistance should be sought to control or remove vermin such as rats, pigeons etc prior to production starting.
- Encourage good staff hygiene and provide facilities for handwashing.

Absence of or poor basic amenities such as heating, lighting, ventilation, toilets

- Check lighting is adequate to ensure people can work safely and install additional lighting where levels are poor.
- Make arrangements for the provision of toilets and washrooms with hot and cold or warm running water and soap, and ensure arrangements for keeping them clean.
- Make sure temperature levels are safe for working and provide heated/ventilated areas that people can take breaks in as necessary.
- Provide clean drinking water.

First aid

- First-aiders should be on site while the production goes ahead.
- Ensure the emergency services are briefed if high-risk activities are planned and that they can gain access to the site.

Different types of buildings may have specific safety issues which need special attention.

- Commercial premises will normally have a good standard of general safety provision but the building will be designed specifically for its purpose. Adaptations may be required to ensure filming can be carried out safely.
- Domestic premises are unlikely to have fire detection and alarm systems which will be required if employees are sleeping on site. It is also unlikely fire doors will be fitted.
- Historic premises (eg stately homes, historic houses) may have partly or wholly out-of-date electrical systems, inadequate fire detection and alarm systems and have poor ability to restrict the spread of fire. Access and egress may be restricted and staircases may be uneven and poorly lit.

Further reading

Risk assessment: A brief guide to controlling risks in the workplace Leaflet INDG163(rev4) HSE 2014 www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/indg163.htm

Safety in the installation and use of gas systems and appliances. Gas Safety (Installation and Use) Regulations 1998. Approved Code of Practice and guidance L56 (Fourth edition) HSE 2013 www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/books/l56.htm

Workplace health, safety and welfare. Workplace (Health, Safety and Welfare) Regulations 1992. Approved Code of Practice and guidance L24 (Second edition) HSE 2013 www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/books/l24.htm

BS 7671:2008+A3:2015 Requirements for Electrical Installations. IET Wiring Regulations. Seventeenth edition British Standards Institution

BS 7909 Code of practice for temporary electrical systems for entertainment and related purposes British Standards Institution

Asbestos www.hse.gov.uk/asbestos/index.htm

CDM 2015 and the entertainment industry www.hse.gov.uk/entertainment/cdm-2015/index.htm

Fire risk assessments www.gov.uk/workplace-fire-safety-your-responsibilities/fire-risk-assessments

Liquid petroleum gas (LPG) www.hse.gov.uk/gas/lpg/index.htm

Work at height www.hse.gov.uk/work-at-height/index.htm

Further information

For information about health and safety, or to report inconsistencies or inaccuracies in this guidance, visit www.hse.gov.uk. You can view HSE guidance online and order priced publications from the website. HSE priced publications are also available from bookshops.

British Standards can be obtained in PDF or hard copy formats from BSI: <http://shop.bsigroup.com> or by contacting BSI Customer Services for hard copies only Tel: 020 8996 9001 email: cservices@bsigroup.com.

This guidance is issued by the Health and Safety Executive. Following the guidance is not compulsory, unless specifically stated, and you are free to take other action. But if you do follow the guidance you will normally be doing enough to comply with the law. Health and safety inspectors seek to secure compliance with the law and may refer to this guidance.

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