

SEWELL BARN THEATRE SOCIETY – POLICY PAPER 4

Health and Safety Policy and Procedures

Introduction

As a voluntary organization, Sewell Barn Theatre Society owes a duty of care to all volunteers and other theatre users, providing them with a healthy and safe environment. To control the risks for all who work at and visit our theatre, we aim to follow best practice as is relevant and proportionate to the activities undertaken by the society, with full compliance to relevant Health and Safety legislation and other requirements, including those relating to Control of Substances Hazardous to Health; Construction and Design Management; infectious disease control; and the conditions of our insurance policy.

In particular, the Society will aim to:

- maintain the building in good working order with specific regard to structural conditions and fire safety
- work with the Sewell Park Academy and Norfolk County Council to provide and maintain welfare facilities (toilets, drinking water, lighting, heating and any other utilities) which meet, or where possible exceed, legal standards
- provide safe means of access to and exit from the building
- maintain equipment and provide safe working practices
- provide such instruction, training, guidance and supervision as is necessary to enable volunteers and contractors to undertake their duties in a healthy and safe manner
- provide similar instruction and guidance to our audiences and other visitors
- actively encourage volunteers and contractors to participate in discussions about health, safety, and environmental issues in the building
- never ask a volunteer or contractor to undertake work that presents a significant and avoidable risk to themselves or the people around them
- provide the means to detect fire, appliances to tackle it, and ways for safe and speedy evacuation of the building. These issues to be checked by front of house volunteers before the start of any event at which the public is present.

Responsibilities

Overall and final collective responsibility for health and safety is held by the Trustees, delegated to the Management Committee of the Sewell Barn Theatre Society.

To ensure health and safety standards are maintained and where possible improved, the following people have responsibility in the areas specified:

- Health and Safety Officer – technical stage matters (light, sound, and effects); overview role for all other health and safety issues
- Buildings Manager – the fabric, utilities, and facilities of both the theatre building and the costume store at Ropemakers' Row
- Stage Managers (for individual productions) – stage and backstage areas during public performances and rehearsals conducted at Sewell Barn premises or elsewhere
- Front of House Coordinator and Duty Front of House Managers – all front-of-house areas during public performances conducted at Sewell Barn premises.

Contact information for current post-holders is given at www.sewellbarn.org/contacts.html.

All other volunteers (actors, technical team, front of house support and all others involved in productions and events, without remuneration) and contractors must:

- co-operate with officers and managers as above on health and safety matters

- not interfere detrimentally with any item or procedure provided by Sewell Barn Theatre Society, in order to safeguard health and safety
- take reasonable care of their own health and safety as well as that of others
- report all health and safety concerns to an appropriate person (as identified above) in a timely manner, using the Accident Book to keep a record of any significant incidents.

Risk assessments

General Risk Assessments (GRAs) will be carried out to identify the main risks and mitigation actions for the theatre, undertaken jointly by the Health and Safety Officer and the Buildings Manager for approval by the Management Committee, subject to any additional mitigation actions that may be considered necessary. GRAs will be reviewed annually or when the theatre's activities change significantly, whichever is soonest.

Separate and specific *Production Risk Assessments* (PRAs) will also be carried out for individual productions, undertaken by the Stage Manager for approval by the Health and Safety Officer. PRAs will identify actions required to remove or control risks, and will be informed by set and lighting/ sound designs (through discussion and documents submitted by the set designer and lighting/sound designers respectively) to the Production Director and Stage Manager. The Buildings Manager may also need to be involved; for example, if there are issues relevant to the building's fabric and facilities, or when anything that may present a significant fire risk is used in a production. Discussion of designs should be done before any production work on Sewell Barn premises, to avoid delay to production schedules. Whilst it is expected that any concerns regarding unacceptable risks arising from PRAs can be resolved by the Health and Safety Officer and production team, any outstanding issues will be referred to the Management Committee.

A separate Fire Risk Assessment (FRA) will also be periodically carried out, taking account of professional advice. Further details are given below and in the *Fire Safety Policy and Procedures*, at www.sewellbarn.org/policies.html.

The Health and Safety Officer, working closely with the Management Committee, will be responsible for ensuring any actions arising from either GRAs, PRAs or FRAs are implemented.

Groups at risk

General public

As a public access entertainment venue, Sewell Barn Theatre Society will be mindful of any risks which could affect members of the public who are on the premises and will take actions to minimise or eliminate the public's exposure to them.

Adequate and up-to-date public liability insurance will be maintained, the policy certificate will be displayed in a public area, and adequate audience supervision by stewards will be provided at all times. Details can be found in the Sewell Barn Theatre Society's *Front of House Policy and Procedure* document, online at <https://www.sewellbarn.org/policies.html>.

Riggers, set builders and other volunteers

Riggers and set builders are volunteer members of a production team who carry out activities that have unavoidably high hazard severity: audio/visual rigging and set construction respectively. The associated risks of these activities therefore need to be mitigated to acceptable levels to ensure safe set rigging and construction. For that purpose, procedures on managing major health and safety risks (many of which are activity specific) are summarised below, with more comprehensive guidance in Sewell Barn Theatre Society's *Guidance Notes for Set Build, Lighting and Sound*, at www.sewellbarn.org/policies.html.

Sewell Barn Theatre Society will engage with all volunteers as necessary on:

- any new measure which may substantially affect their health and safety at work, e.g. new equipment, new ways of working, and new procedures
- arrangements for getting competent people to satisfy health and safety requirements

- information provided to volunteers on the risks to health and safety arising from their work, measures to reduce or get rid of these risks and what they should do if they are exposed to a risk, including emergency procedures
- planning and organising health and safety training
- health and safety consequences for them of any new technology.

Contractors

A contractor is defined as someone providing a practical service to the organisation, such as plumbers, engineers, builders, cleaners etc. In all cases, Sewell Barn Theatre Society will expect them to conduct their work in a way that satisfies both general health and safety legislation and specific Sewell Barn Theatre Society policies and procedures.

Young people and vulnerable adults; external hires

The Sewell Barn Theatre Society has given particular attention to the safeguarding of vulnerable people (those under sixteen years of age and vulnerable adults). More details can be found in the Sewell Barn Theatre's *Safeguarding Policy and Procedures*, online at www.sewellbarn.org/policies.html.

In the case of third party organisations hiring the theatre's facilities with involvement of vulnerable people, all measures will be taken to ascertain that the hirers are fully competent and legitimate, based on the *Booking Policy* documents, as also online at www.sewellbarn.org/policies.html. Sewell Barn Theatre Society will respect any reasonable safeguarding measures put in place by the third party organisation for the protection of their members, volunteers or clients.

Procedures relating to specific health and safety risks

Fire

Fire is one of the most serious hazards faced by any theatre, and the Sewell Barn Theatre Society is committed to taking all practical measures to ensure the safety of its audience, society members and all others potentially affected. A separate *Fire Safety Policy and Procedures* document is online at www.sewellbarn.org/policies.html. A summary of key issues is provided here.

To minimize the risk of fire, the Sewell Barn Theatre Society will:

- maintain safe entrance and exit in the case of evacuation of the building
- keep sources of ignition and flammable substances apart
- minimize the risk of accidental fires by making sure heaters cannot be knocked over, etc
- ensure good housekeeping at all times, e.g. avoid build-up of rubbish that could easily burn
- work closely with the property landlord to maintain fire detection and abatement equipment
- maintain the correct fire-fighting equipment for the building
- keep fire exits and escape routes clearly marked and unobstructed at all times
- ensure volunteers and contractors receive appropriate information on procedures they need to follow, including scheduled fire drills
- carry out a separate Fire Risk Assessment (FRA), based on professional advice, to be reviewed and updated on an annual basis or when activities change significantly, whichever is soonest.

Escape routes will be checked regularly by the Health and Safety Officer, Stage Managers, and Front of House volunteers.

Fire extinguishers will be maintained and checked by an accredited company every year. Fire detectors, alarms and electrical systems are tested by the Sewell Park Academy as part of their tests in the school buildings, and this is done at least annually.

A fire drill procedure will be carried out periodically, organised by the Health and Safety Officer in liaison with the Building Manager and/or Front of House Manager. The procedure will be on display, situated beside the Health and Safety poster on the noticeboard. The evacuation assembly point is on the far side of the school car park, indicated by a green Assembly Point notice.

Smoking

Sewell Barn Theatre Society operates a no smoking policy inside their premises, in accordance with current legislation. This includes vaping. Limited smoking facilities are provided outside the theatre and individuals should be aware of their responsibility to avoid littering, causing fire, and annoying others. Because the theatre is situated on school premises, smoking is prohibited entirely in term time during school hours.

However, smoking may be included as part of the action of a production. In this case, advance notice will be given to audiences, with additional fire safety precautions taken as described in the *Fire Safety Policy*.

Electrical safety

Changes to electrical supply arrangements should only be made by individuals with recognised competence in electrical safety. No changes at all should be made to the Theatre's dimmer banks and three-phase supply without prior discussion/authorisation by the Technical Coordinator. For electrical testing, four categories have been identified, as follows

1. PAT (Portable Appliance Testing): domestic equipment.
2. PAT: lighting equipment, including dimmer banks.
3. Lighting infrastructure, lighting bars and remote outlets backstage.
4. Fixed installation testing.

The frequency of inspection and testing will be determined by the Technical Coordinator and/or Health and Safety Officer, and carried out by appropriately trained personnel. It is anticipated that some of the above items will require a visual inspection, whilst others will require formal testing by instruments.

Manual handling (lifting and carrying)

The nature of theatre work makes manual handling at Sewell Barn Theatre inevitable. The Stage Managers, with the support of the Health and Safety Officer, have direct responsibility for ensuring that any manual handling which might involve significant risk is performed safely by competent persons who have been instructed according to current HSE recommendations.

The Health and Safety Officer has final responsibility for ensuring that hazardous manual handling operations are avoided so far as is reasonably practicable. When necessary, tasks will be redesigned to avoid moving the load, or by automating or mechanising the process.

An assessment of the risk of injury from any hazardous manual handling operations that cannot be avoided will be made and any risk of injury from those operations will be reduced so far as is reasonably practicable.

Where possible, mechanical assistance (e.g. a sack barrow) will be provided. Where this is not reasonably practicable changes to the task, the load and the working environment will be explored.

Slips, trips, and falls

The Stage Manager and Front of House Manager, with the support of the Health and Safety Officer and Buildings Manager, will ensure that the likelihood of accidents due to slips, trips, and falls is reduced as much as possible. This includes but is not limited to:

- ensuring that walkways and fire escape routes are kept clear
- ensuring that loose floor coverings, cables, and other trailing hazards are properly secured and/or covered
- training volunteers in how to perform actions which require elevation, such as standing on and moving between blocks or raised stage areas, in a timely and safe manner
- ensuring that any ladder work and other sustained working at height is limited to contractors and volunteers who are formally recognised as competent for such work. A list of those currently qualified is obtainable from the Health and Safety Officer.

Late and lone working

Late and lone working is not encouraged but, occasionally, productions may require it. Any person working late, or at a time when there are few or no other persons on the premises, must limit their work to low-risk

activities, and check in with at least one other person on a regular basis to ensure that someone else knows of their presence in the building and that they are safe.

Under no circumstances should any volunteer or contractor perform ladder work at height or use powered cutting tools (saws, routers, etc.) when alone in the building.

Substances hazardous to health

It may be necessary to use hazardous chemicals in set construction and/or in the course of productions themselves. These may include special paints, solvents and special effects. Such activity will only take place after a suitable and sufficient assessment of the risks created by that work to the health of those likely to be affected is performed, and steps have been taken to minimize any risks. Substances will be securely stored and Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) will be provided where it is found to be necessary. Where PPE is provided, instruction shall be given on its use and the users should report any faults they might find.

The Sewell Barn Theatre Society is aware of the legislation relating to asbestos; however, responsibility for dealing with the substance within the building lies with the landlord. All works that might expose asbestos will be subject to close inspection, and consultation will be sought if it is suspected that the presence of asbestos is likely. We already hold an asbestos register, compiled after inspection by Norfolk Property Services. The responsibility for consideration of asbestos-related matters lies jointly with the Buildings Manager and the Health and Safety Officer.

Tools

In general, set building teams are required to provide their own tools, although a powered sliding mitre saw and a limited collection of basic hand tools is provided for set building and general use.

Power tool use will be restricted to competent persons only. The duty of care for power tool use lies with the owner of the tool in question and the Set Build Coordinator is responsible for ensuring overall safe practice, supported by the Health and Safety Officer. Hand tool use can be more relaxed but close supervision must be provided for people who are new to using tools.

Dust extraction will be used with power tools where appropriate – the release of large volumes of dust into the auditorium causes unnecessary damage to the lighting fixtures and seating and presents a risk to human health when inhaled.

For more details, see the Sewell Barn Theatre Society's *Guidance Notes for Set Build, Lighting and Sound* online at www.sewellbarn.org/policies.html.

Waste

Sewell Barn Theatre Society will aim to reduce all streams of waste wherever practicable. This includes recycling appropriate items and reusing others. When unavoidable waste is generated, this will be removed from the building at the earliest opportunity, using either local waste disposal facilities or professional services (e.g. skip hire for major clear-outs). The Sewell Barn Theatre Society is registered as a Low Waste Carrier with the Environment Agency; however, that does not generally result in any waiver of charges at waste disposal facilities.

Display screens

The incorrect use of Display Screen Equipment (DSE) can lead to pain in necks, shoulders, backs, arms, wrists and hands, also fatigue and eye strain. Although DSE use is relatively limited in the activities of the Sewell Barn Theatre Society, the Society will be aware of these risks, carrying out a DSE assessment if there is cause for concern. Changes to working practices will be made if considered necessary. A DSE work station assessment form can be found at: <http://www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/ck1.pdf>.

Other health and safety related issues

Accidents and first aid

The Sewell Barn Theatre Society provides equipment and facilities to enable basic first aid to be administered to sick or injured individuals. Cases of illness or injury that necessitate a greater level of treatment will be referred to the Emergency Services (contact details below). First aid kits are provided and

appropriate signage has been placed to advise volunteers and contractors of their locations, in the bar (for front of house) and dressing room (for backstage).

All accidents with potentially-significant health impacts are to be recorded in the Accident Book. Information on where the book is kept is given with the first aid kits, The Health and Safety Officer is responsible for ensuring reporting of relevant accidents and dangerous occurrences to the Management Committee and, where necessary, relevant external agencies.

Contact information relevant to Health and Safety

Police: Tel. 999 in event of an emergency; 101 for non-emergencies

Tel: 0845 456 4567 (0800-2400 daily) to contact the theatre's local police station
Bethel Street Police Station, Bethel Street, Norwich NR2 1NN.

Ambulance: Tel. 999 in event of an emergency

Give our address: Sewell Barn Theatre, Constitution Hill, Norwich NR3 4BB and What3Words location, moving.gear.clown (our tel: 01603 626414).

Hospital: Tel. 01603 286286

Norfolk and Norwich University Hospital NHS Trust, Colney Lane, Norwich NR2 1NH.

Norwich City Council: Tel. 0844 980 3333

Norwich City Council, City Hall, St Peter's Street, Norwich NR2 1NH.

Health and Safety Executive (HSE) East and South East: Tel. 0845 300 9923 (0830-1700 Monday to Friday; for fatal and major injuries only. Rosebery Court Second Floor, St Andrews Business Park, Thorpe St Andrew, Norwich NR7 0HS. Other incidents can be reported online at: www.hse.gov.uk/forms/incident/.

Information, instruction and supervision

The *Health and Safety Law* poster is displayed on one of the noticeboards in the foyer. The Health and Safety Officer is responsible for ensuring that volunteers and contractors working under the control of other team leaders are given relevant health and safety information and support.

Competency for tasks and training. Appropriate induction training will be provided for all volunteers and contractors by the relevant team leader, i.e. Stage Manager, Health and Safety Officer.

Building floor plan and escape routes. A large floor plan of the entire building is framed and displayed in the corridor from the foyer to the auditorium.

Further information to assist with implementation of health and safety policy

Further information about health and safety can be found at <http://www.hse.gov.uk>.

Information about regulations related to reporting injuries, diseases and dangerous occurrences can be found at <http://www.hse.gov.uk/riddor/>.

Policy review

The policy will be reviewed every three years by the Policies Subcommittee and any significant amendments will be referred to the Management Committee for ratification. It may also be reviewed in response to changes in relevant legislation, good practice, or in response to an identified failing in its effectiveness.

Policy initially drafted and adopted: August 2018

Policy last reviewed: October 2023

Next review due: Autumn 2026