

## Grey Paper No 6 - Writing a Health and Safety Policy for your Theatre.

### A Guide.

Many member theatres have asked the National Committee for assistance in writing Health & Safety Policies. This Grey paper is designed to act as a starting point.

**The following abstract is edited guidance given by the Health & Safety Executive. The full unedited text can be found @ <http://www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/indg324.pdf>. This is an excellent free document that is a must for all theatres.**

#### ***“What is a health and safety policy statement?***

*Your health and safety policy statement sets out how you manage health and safety in your organisation. It is a unique document that shows who does what; and when and how they do it.*

#### ***Why do I need a health and safety policy statement?***

*The health and safety policy statement is your starting point to managing health and safety in the workplace. By law, (Health and Safety at Work etc Act 1974 section 2(3)) if you employ five or more people you must have a written health and safety policy. This contains your statement of general policy on health and safety at work and the organisation and arrangements for putting that policy into practice.*

*Writing a health and safety policy statement is more than just a legal requirement – it is your commitment to planning and managing health and safety. It is the key to achieving acceptable standards, reducing accidents and cases of work related ill health and it shows your employees that you care for their health and safety.*

#### ***Who should do what?***

*With very few exceptions, the responsibility for health and safety rests on the theatre management. However, many day-to-day tasks may be delegated. Your statement should show clearly how these tasks are allocated, but remember, the management will still have ultimate responsibility. You should consult your members about the policy statement. Everyone should be able to see from the policy statement exactly who is responsible for different things, such as advice, reporting an accident, and first aid.*

#### ***When and how should they do it?***

*Your policy statement should describe your arrangements, i.e. the systems and procedures you have in place for ensuring members health and safety. You may wish to refer to other documents, e.g. safety checklists, training programmes, emergency instructions, etc. All members may not need to see all the other documents, but they must see the policy statement itself.*

#### ***How often do I need to revise the policy statement?***

*It should be reviewed and possibly revised in the light of experience, or because of operational or organisational changes. It is useful to review the policy regularly (e.g. annually).*

#### ***Do I have to do anything else?***

*Yes, you have other legal duties under other legislation. In particular, under the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999, you have to assess the risks arising from your work activities and record the significant findings. You also have to record your arrangements for health and safety. Depending on your type of work, there may be other specific legislation that will apply.*

*REMEMBER: What you write in the policy has to be put into practice. The true test of a health and safety policy is the actual conditions in the workplace, not how well the statement is written.”*

#### ***End of abstract.***

### **1) INTRODUCTION.**

The Health & safety at Work Act 1974 places a responsibility upon the **employer** to prepare a written statement of general policy regarding the safety and health of all employees at their workplace.

The Act also requires that every **employee** shall:

- Take reasonable care for the safety and health of themselves and other persons who may be affected by their actions;
- Co-operate with their employer so far as is necessary to perform any duty safely or comply with any requirement imposed as a result of any law that may be in force.

## 2) **Written Statement Of Safety Policy - The Main Elements**

- The General Statement.** This should be a declaration of the employers' intent to provide and maintain, so far as reasonably practicable, a safe and healthy working environment and to enlist the support of employees towards achieving these ends. The statement can be quite short; two or three paragraphs may suffice. The statement should be signed by the theatre Chair, to demonstrate commitment to managing health and safety.
- The organisation.** To be effective, this should detail health and safety responsibilities within the organisation. Where appropriate key individuals or their job titles should be named, and responsibilities defined within a job description. This will apply to specialists (e.g. Stage Director, Chief Electrician, etc.) as much as to line management and supervisors.
- The arrangements.** This part of the policy will need to cover the systems and procedures in place for ensuring employees' health and safety.

The health and safety policy statement does not need to record the full details of all procedures. The policy statement can refer to other documentation such as risk assessments, training programmes, emergency instructions, etc. However, the policy statement should record the arrangements and procedures for how these matters are managed.

Examples of topics to be covered in the policy statement could include:

- managing risk assessments;
- arrangements for consultation with members;
- arrangements for maintaining plant and equipment;
- arrangements for safe handling and use of substances e.g. Dry Ice;
- arrangements for providing information, instruction and supervision;
- arrangements for training;
- arrangements for accidents, first aid and ill-health issues;
- arrangements for monitoring;
- emergency procedures arrangements.

### **Further guidance:**

#### **Charity & Voluntary Workers: a guide to health and safety at work.**

HSE Books ISBN 0 7176 2424 2

☎ 01787 881165

#### **Health & Safety of Volunteers: Information sheet.**

National Centre for Volunteering

#### **The Health & Safety handbook for Voluntary & community organisations.**

Directory of Social Change

☎ 0207 209 5151

#### **Guidance on preparing a Health & Safety Policy Document for small firms**

Available @ <http://www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/indg324.pdf>