



## Stunts, fights and other potentially hazardous production activities

### Entertainment Information Sheet No 17

#### Introduction

This information sheet is one of a series produced in consultation with the Joint Advisory Committee for Broadcasting and the Performing Arts. It gives guidance on the risks associated with stunts and other similar activities.

For the purposes of this guidance, a stunt is where a competent person, such as a professional stunt artist, simulates an apparently dangerous activity in a careful and controlled manner.

This guidance does not cover adventure activities or potentially dangerous sports. For dangerous sports or other physically demanding production activities, a competent specialist should provide advice and guidance on the safe design and execution of the activity. A stunt arranger may also be required to oversee the dramatic effect. Circus or similar acts should be undertaken by a competent artist.

#### Legislation

The main legal requirements covering special and visual effects are the Health and Safety at Work etc Act 1974 and the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999 (the Management Regulations).

The Management Regulations require a suitable and sufficient risk assessment to be carried out by employers (or self-employed people) to assess the risk to employees and others who may be affected by their activities and to determine the control measures necessary to avoid risk or reduce it to acceptable levels. An opportunity arises during risk assessment to consider the application of any other relevant health and safety legislation, including the requirement to consider fire precautions and emergency procedures.

You must consult employees on health and safety matters, either directly or through elected safety representatives.

#### Hazards

The hazards which may be present will depend on the nature of the proposed stunt. Typical hazards may include, but are not limited to:

- fire, heat, explosions or pyrotechnics;
- noise;
- moving vehicles or equipment;

- animals;
- weapons;
- water;
- confined spaces or oxygen-deficient atmospheres;
- projectiles and other debris;
- spurious radio signals interfering with firing and control systems;
- public or crew;
- falls from heights;
- violence.

#### Competence

Stunt and fight sequences should only be designed and performed by competent persons. Consideration should be given to the following:

- the knowledge and experience needed to be 'competent' will vary for different activities. A person may be competent for simple action sequences but not for more complicated tasks without supervision from a more experienced and competent person;
- competence should be assessed in relation to the experience, training and the work to be undertaken by the performer;
- a stunt should normally only be undertaken by a stunt artist who is competent in the particular stunt discipline or in exceptional circumstances by the artist or some other specialist operating within their accepted area of expertise and competence;
- a stunt co-ordinator should normally be engaged for complex stunts or for stunts involving more than two artists. In such circumstances the stunt co-ordinator will be required to supervise and monitor the stunt but not participate in it;
- Equity and others have established grading schemes for stunt artists and fight arrangers;
- the Equity Stunt Register places stunt artists into experience levels and defines the limitations of that experience;
- the stunt co-ordinator (or stunt artist for relatively minor stunts) should assess the risks entailed in the stunt and ensure adequate precautions are identified and implemented;
- the stunt co-ordinator or artist should only do work that their levels of experience, skills, training and fitness allow;
- when a stunt co-ordinator or artist engages other stunt personnel then they should ensure only suitable and competent stunt artists are employed;
- all stunts should be rehearsed thoroughly and adequate communication put in place;

- stunts involving vehicles must not take place on the public road unless the local police etc have been informed;
- the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) should be informed for aerial stunts and permissions obtained;
- the British Parachute Association should be consulted for all stunts involving parachute jumps. Base jumps are not legal in the UK;
- children should not take part in any stunt.

## Fights

Fights should be under the control and supervision of a competent fight arranger or suitably experienced stunt professional who should ensure all risks are assessed and adequately controlled.

Members of the public, actors, presenters etc may only participate in staged fights if the fight arranger is satisfied the risks are suitably low and that they have received adequate training or coaching beforehand.

## Responsibility

Responsibility for health and safety rests with the employer, normally this means the production company but it could also be a broadcaster or a department or unit within an organisation. On a day-to-day basis, however, the overall responsibility for ensuring that the appropriate standards of health and safety are achieved and maintained throughout the production process rests with the producer.

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

The producer retains overall responsibility for the production and is responsible for ensuring appropriate co-ordination and control of the event, taking into account the risk assessment from the stunt co-ordinator or fight arranger and others. The producer should ensure that:

- the stunt co-ordinator or fight arranger is competent for the work in question;
- the stunt co-ordinator or fight arranger is provided with adequate information regarding the production;
- adequate time and resources are allowed for the effect and rehearsals based on advice from the stunt co-ordinator or fight arranger;
- any actors who may take part in a stunt are suitable in terms of their fitness for the task, in consultation with the relevant specialists including taking suitable medical advice where required;
- sufficient time is provided within the schedule for changes of plan;
- an overall risk assessment for the production is produced;

- arrangements are in place for communicating the risks and safety arrangements to all those affected.

The stunt co-ordinator or fight arranger should remain responsible at all times for advising the producer on the safe planning and execution of the action sequence. They should ensure that:

- the effect is adequately resourced and planned;
- a suitable and sufficient risk assessment detailing the risks and control measures, including the fitness and skills of the participants, the environment etc, has been carried out and that the controls have been implemented;
- the significant findings of the risk assessment are communicated to the producer;
- the necessary equipment and materials are specified and procured and that they are fit for purpose prior to use;
- adequate emergency measures such as fire-fighting or first aid are in place.

## Risk assessment

The producer should ensure that there is an overall risk assessment for the production and that the arrangements for communicating the risks and safety arrangements are adequate. They should ensure that the control measures are in place.

The stunt co-ordinator or fight arranger is responsible for ensuring a suitable and sufficient risk assessment, for all the activities under their control, is undertaken and that control measures are implemented. Control measures should ensure the safety of:

- people and equipment under the control of the production, eg crew, artists;
- third parties not involved in the production, eg the public.

The control measures may be in the form of a method statement. The information needs to be provided in good time.

## Control measures

The control measures may include but are not limited to:

- determination of safe working distances;
- control of flash or radiated heat;
- noise control;
- blast control;
- control of fragmentation particles and other debris control;
- cueing arrangements;
- personal protective equipment (PPE) such as safety lines and harnesses;

- emergency arrangements for dealing with sequences that do not go according to plan;
- exclusion zones;
- other specialist advice or support, such as:
  - engineering advice about structural integrity;
  - specialist dive contractor for work involving underwater stunts;
  - specialist aircraft operator for stunts involving aircraft;
  - armourer for stunts involving weapons in fight sequences;
- specific responsibilities of stunt co-ordinator or fight arranger, stunt artists, actors and others directly involved in and managing or co-ordinating the sequence;
- controls to reduce risks to others (eg public, crew, artists).

The producer should use this information as part of the risk assessment for the whole production to:

- consider the action sequence timing and compatibility of each activity on all those involved in the production;
- make all involved aware of the main risks in producing the programme;
- consider whether new risks arise as a result of the combined method statements and systems of work;
- comply with the relevant regulations.

If there are any significant changes to the production activity, the stunt co-ordinator or fight arranger should be consulted and the risk assessments should be reviewed to determine if they are still valid and to ensure the controls identified are still adequate. Any significant changes in the risks or controls should be communicated to all those involved.

## Communication

Everyone involved should be thoroughly briefed about the risks arising out of the sequence and any required controls prior to any rehearsal.

There should be effective means to warn and exclude people from any danger area. The producer, in consultation with the stunt co-ordinator or fight arranger, is responsible for ensuring adequate arrangements for managing and policing any exclusion zone. The risk assessment should clearly identify these arrangements and also those responsible for enforcing and monitoring the exclusion zone. Those people who have been nominated should have adequate authority to ensure full compliance and should be dedicated to the task for the duration of the action sequence. There may be a need to involve the local police.

There should be agreed systems or code words to immediately stop the action.

## Rehearsal

Safety can be improved by rehearsing the action. Only essential personnel should be in the area. All those involved in the sequence, including artists, should be present at rehearsal or re-rehearsal and should be made fully aware of the action intended, the risks, the control measures and emergency arrangements.

## Execution

The stunt co-ordinator or fight arranger should have complete authority over the safety arrangements during the execution of the action sequence.

Before commencing any stunt or fight action, checks should be made by the producer and the stunt co-ordinator or fight arranger to ensure exclusion zones and emergency plans are in place and that all requisite protective equipment is worn.

The person supervising the stunt or fight action should have clear sight at all times of the action and immediate area and be able to communicate with all key players.

## Further reading

*Management of health and safety at work. Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999. Approved Code of Practice and guidance L21 (Second edition) HSE Books 2000 ISBN 0 7176 2488 9*

*Special or visual effects involving explosives of pyrotechnics used in film and television productions. Entertainment Information Sheet 16 HSE Books 2002*

## Further information

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This leaflet contains notes on good practice which are not compulsory but which you may find helpful in considering what you need to do

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