



Risk Assessments

Guidelines for doing a risk assessment specific to Covid-19

For those performing their own act

In live performance in variety, circus and entertainment

August 2020

Protecting against Covid-19

Coronavirus and the subsequent disease Covid-19 have been shown to be a significant threat to health and life for humans and to be transmitted very easily within the population. This has led to the lockdown we have found ourselves in since March this year which is now gradually being relaxed. Now that some activities within live performance can go ahead consideration needs to be given as to how this can be done safely with the lowest possible risk from the virus.

The tools for preventing the spread of Covid-19 within a workplace (which includes anywhere that a live performance takes place) are listed in order as follows:-

1. Risk assessments
2. Hygiene (handwashing and surface cleaning etc)
3. Working from Home where possible
4. Social distancing (generally 2m or if not possible 1m+ from 4th July)
5. Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) including screens, gloves and masks

So, the risk assessment is key to the process with hygiene, social distancing and possibly PPE all relevant to reducing the risk of Covid-19 transmission when working as a performer. Obviously working from home, which in this context could mean delivering a performance online, is not being considered in this document but is an option for some performance or teaching engagements.

What is a risk assessment?

A risk assessment is a process that is undertaken to minimise the risk of harm to workers and others from hazards most commonly in some kind of workplace. The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) produces a guide named '5 Steps to Risk Assessment' which is a useful document describing the risk assessment process. It is heavily slanted towards typical workplaces such as factories, shops, offices and building sites but the advice is basically generic and can be applied more generally and include venues for live performance.

When members working in the field of variety, circus and entertainment need to do risk assessments these will be for the places where they perform which can be streets, circus tents, theatres, pubs and clubs, care homes, private homes, parks and open spaces, libraries and even working remotely online. A risk assessment is a legal requirement in some settings such as workplaces where it is carried out by an employer for their employees and other visitors. While it may not necessarily be a legal requirement for a performer to carry one out, or to write it down if the business has less than 5 employees, it could be a contractual requirement or could be required to demonstrate to an insurer in the event of a claim that they have taken due care to prevent harm. It is also good

practice for performers to carry out a risk assessment to protect themselves and others and they will have the best knowledge of their own act.

Consider the following when undertaking a Covid-19 risk assessment:

- ✚ How to minimise the risk of catching the virus yourself
 - ✚ How to minimise the risk of passing the virus to others if you unknowingly have it
- By:-
- Transmission via airborne droplets from coughs, sneezes or breath (note that 2m is considered a safe distance for normal speech when facing someone but 3 - 6m is recommended safe for singing or voice projection. The 2m distance was reduced to '1m plus' from 4th July 2020 but only if 2m is not possible.
 - Transmission via contaminated surfaces. As a rough guide the virus can remain active for 72 hours on metal and plastic surfaces and 24 hours on paper, cardboard and wood.

How to undertake a risk assessment

Referring to the Health and Safety Executive document the steps are outlined below:

1. Identify the hazards

In a typical performing context some examples could include the following:

- a) Loading and unloading equipment
- b) Tripping over cables
- c) Slippery surfaces
- d) Adverse weather conditions
- e) Speakers falling over
- f) Electrocutation from damaged equipment
- g) Falling off stage or apparatus such as unicycle or circus equipment
- h) Props going out of performance area
- i) Accidental physical contact with other persons
- j) Assault

And specifically related to Covid-19:

- a) Sharing vehicles with those from outside household (or bubble)
- b) Sharing equipment
- c) Sharing loading and unloading duties
- d) Coming into close proximity with others
- e) Air flow and ventilation in venue
- f) Using toilets / dressing rooms
- g) Touching surfaces in venue such as door handles and furniture
- h) Transmission of virus through singing or vocal work

2. Decide who might be harmed and how

This is likely to include the following people

- a) Yourself
- b) Others in your household (or bubble)
- c) Fellow artists
- d) Audience
- e) Staff at venue
- f) Other members of the public

Deciding how you or they might be harmed is through the typical injuries caused by the standard hazards and in relation to Covid-19 is catching / spreading the virus

3. Evaluate the risk and decide on precautions

When considering this you need to think about the likelihood of something happening as well as the consequences if it does. So, something like an audience member being hit by a lightweight juggling ball might be quite likely but does not present a serious risk of injury whereas being hit by a falling speaker might not be so likely but could have much more serious consequences.

It is common to rate the risks on a matrix which measures severity against likelihood. If an activity shows up as likely and of high consequence then measures need to be put in place to reduce the risk to an acceptable level.

- **Likelihood** – Estimate how likely it is that the hazard will cause some kind of harm.
 - Almost Certain - there is an almost 100% chance of the hazard causing injury or illness.
 - Probable = injury or illness due to this hazard is probable.
 - Possible = there is a 50-50 chance that this hazard will cause injury or illness.
 - Remote = the hazard might cause injury or illness 1 in 10 times.
 - Improbable = Hazard is unlikely to cause injury or illness

- **Severity** – Estimate how serious the harm could be.
 - Very High - the hazard would cause multiple fatalities
 - High – the hazard would cause injury or illness resulting in fatality.
 - Medium - the hazard would cause major injury or illness.
 - Low – the hazard would cause injury or illness requiring treatment onsite or lost time.
 - Insignificant - the hazard would cause injury or illness without lost time

- **Risk Rating** - The Likelihood and Severity determine the Risk Rating. For example:

KEY	1	2	3	4	5
Severity Rating	Negligible	Minor Injury	Major Injury (RIDDOR)	Fatality	Multiple Fatalities
Likelihood of Occurrence	Improbable	Remote	Possible	Probably	Almost Certain

RR = Risk Rating

Severity-5	5	10	15	20	25	<table border="1"> <tr> <td>Red</td> <td>Unacceptable risk, plan out or add further controls</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Orange</td> <td>Acceptable only if no other method viable and with high level controls in place</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Yellow</td> <td>Acceptable with suitable controls</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Green</td> <td>Acceptable, no further action required</td> </tr> </table>	Red	Unacceptable risk, plan out or add further controls	Orange	Acceptable only if no other method viable and with high level controls in place	Yellow	Acceptable with suitable controls	Green	Acceptable, no further action required
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Severity-4	4	8	12	16	20									
Severity-3	3	6	9	12	15									
Severity-2	2	4	6	8	10									
Severity-1	1	2	3	4	5									
Likelihood ->	1	2	3	4	5									

Covid-19 can have serious consequences so any activity likely to transmit the virus must be curtailed. Consequences are likely to be more serious for certain groups such as over 70s or those with BAME heritage or those who are clinically vulnerable so extra precautions should be taken if these groups will be present.

4. Record your findings and ensure you implement them

You should write down what you have done so that you have a record of your process showing the reduction of the risks. The Health and Safety Executive has a table format which you can use. You make a list of the activities you've considered and the final risk rating after appropriate measures have been put in place.

The document can be shown to the booker and will also be valuable reference should an incident occur particularly if there is an insurance claim.

5. Review your findings

Your act may change over time performing new skills and using different equipment and you may work at different types of venues so you will need to keep your risk assessment under constant review. In relation to Covid-19 it is also likely that medical advice will change, for example, safe distances may change as could recommendations on PPE and other factors so this also needs to be regularly reviewed.

To be read in conjunction with Health and Safety Executive document 5 Steps To Risk Assessment

Other suggestions

When corresponding with hirers / bookers it may be worth reassuring them of some of the basic precautions you take when performing your act. This could include:-

- Disinfection of equipment before loading / unloading and between sets
- Wearing of gloves for loading / unloading and wearing of face coverings while not performing
- Regular hand sanitising
- Physical barriers for distancing
- Not travelling from job to job

Where to find more information:

<https://www.hse.gov.uk/simple-health-safety/risk/risk-assessment-template-and-examples.htm>

<https://nasauk.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/NASA-UK-COVID-outdoor-arts-Risk-Assessment-considerations-v3.pdf>

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/working-safely-during-coronavirus-covid-19/performing-arts>

<https://www.eventsindustryforum.co.uk/index.php/11-features/14-keeping-workers-and-audiences-safe-during-covid-19>

[Note that free registration is required.]

Please note that government guidelines are regularly updated so ensure you follow the latest guidance on their official websites.