

Stunts, fights and other potentially hazardous production activities

HSE information sheet

Entertainment Information Sheet No 17 (Revision 1)

Introduction

In this information sheet, '**must**' denotes a legal obligation. Words such as 'do', 'should' etc are used to give advice on good practice and are not compulsory.

This information sheet is one of a series produced by HSE in consultation with the Joint Advisory Committee for Entertainment (JACE). It gives general 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 performer, simulates an apparently dangerous activity in a careful and controlled manner during the production of a cinema film or a television programme. A stunt action coordinator may also be required to oversee the dramatic effect. Circus acts or similar activities should be conducted by a competent artiste.

This guidance does not cover private individuals engaging in adventure activities or 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. Where filming impacts on a specialist activity, a stunt coordinator may be required to oversee the activity, eg direction requires the activity to be modified for dramatic effect.

Legislation

The main legal requirements covering stunt work 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 that a suitable and sufficient risk assessment be conducted by employers (or the self-employed) to assess the risks to their employees and others who may be affected by their activities. It should be used to identify control

measures that can be implemented to control the risks identified. An opportunity arises during risk assessment to consider the application of any other health and safety legislation or guidance, including the requirement to consider fire precautions and other emergency procedures.

You must consult employees on health and safety matters, either directly or through 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, explosion or pyrotechnics;
- noise;
- moving vehicles or equipment;
- animals;
- weapons;
- water;
- confined spaces or oxygen deficient atmospheres;
- projectiles and other flying debris;
- mobile phones and other radio signals interfering with both firing and control systems;
- public or crew;
- falls from height;
- violence;
- light sources;
- weather.

Competence

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

- Only those having the necessary competence, knowledge, experience and training should be involved in stunt work. Different levels of competence and supervision may be needed for simple or complex stunts.

- Seeking advice on competence from recognised industry bodies such as the JISC (Joint Industry Stunt Committee). The JISC Stunt Register places stunt performers into three experience levels and defines the limitations of that experience:
 - **Probationary** members may only work as stunt performers under the supervision of a full member of the register.
 - **Intermediate** members will have successfully completed the probationary period and may work on their own without supervision where they are the only person involved in the stunt. However, they may not supervise other stunt performers or actors.
 - **Full** members will have successfully completed the intermediate stage of the register and are considered to be experienced stunt performers who may act as stunt coordinators.
- Stunts should normally be conducted by a stunt performer competent for the stunt to be performed. In exceptional circumstances and where the requirements for competence and experience are satisfied, they can be performed by an actor or other specialist.
- A competent stunt coordinator who is not participating in the stunt should normally be engaged to monitor and supervise the activity.
- The stunt coordinator (or competent stunt performer in the case of solo stunts), should assess the risks entailed in the stunt and make sure adequate controls are identified and implemented.
- Stunt coordinators are to ensure that those involved in stunts are competent for the work being done.
- Sufficient time must be allowed to ensure adequate rehearsal can be conducted.
- Adequate communications must be in place.
- Stunts involving vehicles on the public roads must be coordinated with the appropriate police/local authority.
- Stunts involving aerial work must be coordinated with the Civil Aviation Authority.
- Stunts involving parachute jumping should be undertaken only after consultation with the British Parachute Association (BPA).
- The requirement for risk assessment and further controls if members of the public, actors, children etc are to participate in stunts.
- suitable and sufficient risk assessments are conducted and are reviewed as necessary when changes are required;
- arrangements are in place for the communication of risk and safety arrangements to all involved;
- the stunt coordinator is competent to supervise the work required;
- the stunt coordinator is provided with the necessary information required to allow him to work safely;
- the stunt coordinators advice is sought on the necessary time and resource allocation to allow sufficient time to rehearse and produce the stunt;
- extra resource and time is allocated as necessary to accommodate changes;
- actors taking part in any stunt are competent to do so, are medically fit for the activity and their involvement is approved by the stunt coordinator.

While the producer remains responsible for health and safety throughout the production, the stunt coordinator should make sure the producer is advised fully on the planning and execution of the stunt sequence. They should also make sure that:

- the stunt is adequately resourced and planned;
- a suitable and sufficient assessment of the risks has been conducted and that appropriate controls are in place. The assessment should include all the factors relevant to the particular stunt;
- the significant findings of the assessment should be communicated to the producer;
- the necessary clothing, equipment and other materials are procured, are fit for purpose and have been subject to any examination and testing, as required by specific legislation, LOLER etc;
- the measures in place for fire fighting, first aid etc are adequate for the stunt being worked on.

Risk assessment

The producer is responsible for ensuring that a suitable and sufficient assessment of the risks is made for the production and that adequate controls are put in place. They are also responsible for ensuring that the findings of the assessment are communicated to those that may be affected.

The stunt coordinator should conduct a suitable and sufficient risk assessment for all the activities under their control and ensure that the necessary control measures are put in place. This assessment should be communicated to the producer in order that its findings can inform the overall production risk assessment.

Responsibility

Responsibility for health and safety rests with the employer, which, in normal circumstances will be the producer/production company.

The producer retains overall health and safety responsibility for all parts of the production, including stunt work. For stunt work, the producer should make sure that:

Control measures

The following are examples of control measures that may be considered. The list is not exhaustive and there may be others depending on the particular stunt;

- safe working distances;
- controlling flash and/or radiant heat;
- control of noise;
- control of blast;
- control of flying debris, particles etc;
- cueing;
- personal protective equipment (PPE), eg work positioning and restraint systems;
- contingency plans for unexpected situations/outcomes;
- managed exclusion zones;
- outside specialist advice concerning, for example:
 - structural integrity;
 - underwater work;
 - aircraft work;
 - weapons;
 - rigging;
 - special effects;
- making sure all personnel involved in the stunt are fully aware of their responsibilities;
- sufficient planning time is allocated.

Communication

Prior to beginning the rehearsal for the stunt, all involved in it and those that could be affected by it, are to be informed of the risks involved and the control measures in place.

The producer must make sure, in consultation with the stunt coordinator, that effective measures are in place to ensure persons cannot access danger areas/exclusion zones. In some cases this may require the involvement of local agencies such as the police.

Rehearsal

Rehearsal is a vital part of improving the safe execution of the stunt. All involved in the final sequence, including actors and stunt personnel, should be present at the rehearsal and should receive full detail of the intended action, the risks involved and the control measures in place. They should also be briefed about emergency measures.

During both rehearsal and execution phases there should be an agreed and understood system in place to immediately stop the action.

Execution

The safety arrangements during the execution of the action sequence should be closely monitored by the stunt coordinator, and should be changed as necessary.

Before commencing any stunt or fight action, checks should be made by the producer and the stunt coordinator to make sure control measures such as exclusion zones, emergency arrangements, PPE etc are in place and are effective.

The stunt supervisor should have best sight of the action and its immediate area at all times and is able to communicate with all key personnel.

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 978 0 7176 2488 1
www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/books/l21.htm

Controlling noise at work. The Control of Noise at Work Regulations 2005. Guidance on Regulations L108 (Second edition) HSE Books 2005 ISBN 978 0 7176 6164 0
www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/books/l108.htm

Health and safety in audio-visual production: Your legal duties Leaflet INDG360 HSE Books 2002 (priced packs of 5 ISBN 978 0 7176 2551 2)
www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/indg360.pdf

www.hse.gov.uk/risk

<http://jigs.org.uk>

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.

The Metropolitan Police Service Film Unit was consulted on the development of this information sheet www.met.police.uk

This document 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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