

DATA SHEET

ASSESSING LOCATION HAZARDS:

Advice for Scenic Artists

Monona Rossol, Health and Safety Director,
United Scenic Artists, Local USA829, IATSE

212/777-0062 or e-mail:ACTSNYC@cs.com
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Filming in locations that represent a city's underbelly such as abandoned buildings, shooting galleries and closed factories, is not only romantic, it's dangerous. Renovating and working in old armories, piers, warehouses and other venues large enough to accommodate filming, set construction and shops also can be hazardous. Even well-maintained public buildings and schools can be unsafe locations under certain conditions.

Any location can harbor biological, chemical, structural and safety hazards. Cleaning up, repairing, or renovating in the presence of some of these hazardous conditions can only be done safely and legally by specially trained or certified workers. And certain jobs require professional surveys and laboratory tests be done.

Obviously, producers have to pay for these tests and services. If your producers are the kinds of employers who recognize the hazards and are willing to pay for tests, talk to them. If not, call the union. In some instances we will pay for inspections and tests. In others, we will work out the problem with the producers without revealing who brought it to our attention. Our aim is to keep you safe without damaging your relationship with the employer.

By making conditions safe on the location, you also are protecting all the other workers and helping the employer avoid OSHA and EPA fines or lawsuits. Local 829 provides employers with professional advice and industrial hygiene services through their Health and Safety Officer **at no cost**. This is part of Local 829's commitment to prevention of accidents and illnesses.

IDENTIFYING THE PROBLEMS

There probably always will be less than ideal conditions on locations. However, there are some hazards that are too potentially dangerous to ignore. This data sheet will help you identify some obvious ones. When in doubt, call and describe the problem to your health and Safety Officer and we will decide together.

COMMON LOCATION HAZARDS

Structural hazards. Rotted flooring, crumbling pilings, rickety staircases, sagging floors, and similar defects are picturesque and hazardous. Even sound buildings can be rendered dangerous if they are altered by removing walls or parts of walls, beams, or other support structures or if heavy equipment or heavy storage are brought in. In all these cases, a qualified structural engineer should be consulted before work begins. Do not accept the assurances of people without engineering credentials.

If you suspect there are structural problems and there has been no assessment by an engineer, report this immediately to Local 829.

Fire Safety: sprinklers, exits, escape routes. OSHA requires the producer to hold a formal meeting or training about the fire and evacuation procedures on each location before work begins for all employees. For example, if there is an overhead sprinkler system, they should tell you if it is in working order and if it is a dry or wet pipe system. (Dry pipe systems give you a short time to turn the system off if a head is accidentally damaged during construction to avoid water damage.) If there are no sprinklers look for hand-held, ABC-type extinguishers located at least every 75 feet. The tags should show the extinguishers have been inspected in the last 6 months.

Look around you: there must be at least two escape routes from all areas. Exits or exit signs should be visible from all locations. Fire doors and panic bolts must be in good repair and must never be chained or locked while you are working in the location. Inadequate escape routes or damaged fire escapes are items which have to be corrected before the location is safe enough for you to begin to work. Employers must explain how to access fire escapes and where everyone should meet after evacuation. Let the Union know if employers do not provide required training.

Changes in elevation. Any elevated platforms, storage areas, shafts or holes where people could fall more than 6 feet must be guarded. Standard railings (either permanent or temporary) and covers over holes must be installed before you are asked to work in an area. Once the site is open to non-construction workers such as cameramen and actors, changes in elevation of 4 feet or more must be guardrailed. Guard rails should be 42 inches high with a midrail. They must withstand 200# of force from all directions, so they usually are made from 2 by 4 lumber. There must be a 4 inch toe board under the rail if people can walk under the platform that is railed.

Access to changes in elevation such as ladders and stairs must also meet OSHA regulations. For example, stairs having four or more risers or which rise more than 30 inches must be equipped with at least one handrail and one stair rail that is between 30 and 34 inches above the stairs along each unprotected side or edge. Stair rails also must be able to take 200 # force in all directions.

Electrical hazards. Do not ignore flickering or dimming lights, frequently interrupted power, damaged wiring, or other electrical defects. OSHA also requires outlets used for power tools on construction sites and all that may be in wet or damp locations (e.g., within 10 feet of a source of water to have ground fault circuit interrupters (GFCI). These usually have a little reset button on them. Report problems to your union and insist that wiring meet OSHA standards.

Only bring double insulated tools to the workplace. Get rid of cheap hair dryers, drills and other tools that do not have the double insulated label or that have only two prongs on their plugs.

Garbage and toxic chemicals. Only professional waste handlers can safely remove refuse that contains animal and human excrement, dead animals, rodent nests, discarded needles, used condoms, moldy and mildewed materials, and similar unsanitary substances. Only toxic waste disposal contractors can legally remove old chemical products and containers, unidentified or unlabeled substances, asbestos and lead paint waste and similar waste.

Waste removal services are expensive, but scenic artists or general laborers must not handle unsanitary, infectious or chemical wastes. Call your union if you are asked to do this work or if you suspect that untrained workers are removing waste.

You may safely remove an occasional small dead animal, a mouse or bird nest. Make a 1:10 bleach and water solution while wearing splash goggles and gloves. Spray the solution on the refuse until it is soaked and place in double plastic bags without raising dust.

These precautions are necessary because serious diseases can be carried by animal waste, or moldy and decaying materials. To list just a few: pigeon fever, tetanus, salmonella, dozens of allergies and toxic illnesses from molds and fungi, rabies (has been transmitted by dead bats and other animals), hantavirus (there are now two deaths attributed to hantavirus from mice in the New York area), Legionnaires disease, and many others.

Lead paint. Buildings built before 1978 should be assumed to contain lead paint unless actual testing shows otherwise. Even well-maintained older buildings may contain painted over or encapsulated lead paint that can be made air-borne if renovation of any painted surface is planned.

The OSHA Lead in Construction Standard forbids sanding and resurfacing, removal or demolition of any painted surface unless the paint has been professionally tested and shown to be lead free. If lead is found, only trained lead abatement contractors can do the work. Scenic artists must never do this work.

Even when renovation is not planned, dust from lead paint still can be hazardous. Testing should be done if visible paint dust or potential sources of paint dust are noted. Two examples are:

- * Deteriorating and chipping paint: paint that leaves a chalky residue on your hands or is chipping and flaking off walls is a source of lead and lead dust. If the chips reach the floor and are walked on, large amounts of lead dust can be created.
- * Friction surfaces: Painted surfaces like those on window frames or sliding doors create dust when drawn over each other.

Asbestos. Owners or lessors of any building in which people work, whether currently occupied or previously unoccupied/abandoned must have an asbestos plan. In August 1994, OSHA released its final rule on asbestos (29 CFR 1910.1001 and 1926.1101). Now in effect, this new regulation increases protection for workers such as maintenance personnel, tradesmen, and even general office occupants.

The new rule defines as "presumed asbestos-containing materials (PACM)" any untested thermal insulation, spray-applied and/or troweled-on surfacing material, including resilient floor covering materials installed in buildings in 1980 or prior. This "presumption" requires owners/operators to treat all untested materials as asbestos, whether they are or not, until inspections and tests prove otherwise. This includes labeling of all PACM as asbestos. Although written surveys of all materials are not mandatory, the introduction of the PACM terminology effectively forces building owners/operators who have not yet performed asbestos surveys to do so in order to obtain relief from requirements to label and treat all untested materials as asbestos.

The new rule also defines asbestos-containing materials (ACM) as "any material containing more than one percent asbestos." This new cutoff is now consistent with the EPA definition. The new rule further requires that many people must be notified of the presence of ACM including employees who will work in or adjacent to areas containing ACM. For example, if the insulated pipe in a work room is asbestos, this information must be formally presented to workers who work in or next to this room. If it has not been tested, it must be labeled as presumed asbestos.

Only certified abatement contractors are allowed to alter or demolish asbestos-containing building materials. Scenic artists must not do this work. Take care not to disturb asbestos or enter an area where it is loose, exposed, or powdery (friable). If the workplace is highly contaminated, enough asbestos can be tracked home on your shoes and clothing to harm your family.

Sources. Some asbestos sources are easily recognized. Your Health and Safety Officer can take a sample for testing if you think you see any of the following which are damaged or deteriorating:

- * Insulation around pipes, furnaces. Insulation can be in the form of paper, cardboard, a powdery material under a cloth covering, cord and rope (e.g. between metal surfaces around equipment doors and openings), and many other forms.
- * Some old composition ceiling tiles and old acoustic board and tile.
- * Some cements contain asbestos. Crumbling cement can be tested.
- * Transite™ and other asbestos boards. Usually mottled and grey in color, these boards were used extensively. They still are used for insulating boiler room walls and similar applications.
- * Old wall board and plaster. Asbestos was commonly added to plaster and to a few old types of wall board.
- * Vinyl floor tiles. Old tiles commonly contained asbestos. Some new tiles also may contain asbestos. They are hazardous when broken, sanded, or buffed during maintenance. The mastic under the tiles often contains asbestos as well.
- * Roofing felts, tar paper and caulks. Old roofs that have become weathered and dry may release asbestos when disturbed.
- * Old Spackle-type plaster repair compounds.
- * Wiring: both the white fuzzy variety with asbestos on the outside and wires with plastic/rubber sheathing over fibrous asbestos underneath.

- * Old papier mache products/props: some instant papier maches labeled "non-toxic" contained as much as 80 % asbestos powder.
- * Certain rocks, minerals, and their powders: Natural minerals that often contain asbestos include talc (old talcum powder or soapstone), polishing/cutting dust from gem stones such as serpentine (tiger's eye) and one form of jade, and vermiculite dust (from Montana mines).

Special Theatrical Asbestos Sources. Other sources in old or poorly maintained theaters uses as locations can include:

- * Asbestos fire curtains: Many theaters still have these. If they are painted on both sides and in good condition, fibers may not escape. If the paint is cracked or damaged showing asbestos fibers beneath, they can shed fibers into the air.
- * Asbestos cloth curtains. Short lengths of asbestos cloth used to be hung behind lights in the line borders when they were set so close that they could heat the border. There was no paint or encapsulation on these and they shed fibers.
- * Asbestos wiring: Lighting instruments, light boards, and other old equipment may have the fuzzy white asbestos wires which shed fibers when new and will shed even more when old.
- * Equipment insulation: Asbestos insulation may also be inside equipment such as lighting instruments, projectors, follow spots, light boards, electric heaters, and other equipment.

Treated wood. Structural plywood and outdoor wooden items such as fences, decks, playground structures, and picnic tables usually have been treated with restricted-use pesticides (e.g. creosote, CCA, pentachlorophenol). Some of these treated woods are not green in color and cannot be detected visually. Never burn wood that may have been treated. If treated wooden materials must be cut, sanded, demolished or modified, you will need extra respiratory and personal protective equipment and dust-collecting woodworking tools.

Pest control. Some locations will need pest control while other sites may be hazardous from previous use of pesticides. Signs that there may be a problem include the presence of many live and dead insects, roach bait stations, mouse and rat traps, and evidence of insect or rodent damage. Licensed Pesticide Applicators should be consulted about treating sites for control of infestations.

Gloves and respiratory protection should be used whenever cutting or sanding old base boards and other materials on which pesticides were traditionally applied and sprayed.

Enclosed or confined spaces. OSHA has special rules for work inside a boiler, tank, pipe, boxes or any space which is relatively small in size with no openings for cross ventilation. OSHA calls these "confined spaces." One reason for the special concern is that life-threatening amounts of gases and vapors can collect in such areas quickly. Painting or using any product containing solvents in small spaces can fill them with high concentrations of toxic vapors in minutes. Call your Health and Safety Officer for advice if you think may be working in a confined space.

Bathroom facilities. Clean bathroom facilities must be present in sufficient numbers to accommodate the size of the workforce. If not, portable toilets must be rented until bathrooms can

be installed. Portable facilities alone are not adequate. A water supply for washing hands and cleaning up also must be available.

Drinking water. In older cities and buildings, service pipes and plumbing pipes often are made of lead. Lead also may be found in solder used on potable water pipe (lead was banned for this use in 1986), in faucets, and floor model water coolers. The only way to know if water is safe to drink in older buildings is to have it tested. If the water has not been tested, or if the test shows the water is above the accepted limit, ask for bottled water delivery.

Eating areas and craft tables. Scenic and carpentry areas in which paints, wood dust, welding fumes and other toxic substances are released are not suitable locations for eating under the OSHA regulations. There should be an isolated clean room for preparing and eating food.

Working alone. Scenic artists should not work alone in locations where toxic paints, solvents, machinery and the like are present. The buddy system should be used which requires at least two experienced workers to be present and within sight and hearing of each other.

Special problems. Old factories and commercial buildings may be contaminated with toxic substances. For example, mercury can contaminate buildings in which neon and mercury vapor lights, thermometers and other instruments were made. Buildings used for metal working, electroplating, and jewelry making can be contaminated with highly toxic metals like chromium, cobalt, nickel, and even arsenic and lead. Old textile factories can be contaminated with highly carcinogenic organic chemical dyes and their contaminants including dioxins.

Treat all old building materials from industrial sites as potentially toxic by using respiratory protection when cutting, sanding or demolishing them.

Summary. These are a few of the most common hazards found in locations. If you find other problems or need more complete information about hazards and OSHA violations at a particular site, call your Health and Safety Officer. Local 829 is committed to providing prevent accidents and occupational illnesses.

Monona Rossol
212/777-0062
e-mail:ACTSNYC@cs.com.

FAST CHECKLIST FOR LOCATION HAZARDS

Structural hazards: rotted flooring, crumbling pilings, rickety staircases, sagging floors, and similar defects should not be present unless a structural engineer has determined they are safe.

Fire Safety: Look for either an overhead sprinkler system or hand-held, recently-inspected extinguishers located at least every 75 feet.

Emergency exits and escape routes. There must be two escape routes from all areas, exits or exit signs visible from anywhere, fire exits and panic bolts must be in good repair and unchained.

Changes in elevation. Platforms, shafts or holes where one could fall more than 4 feet must be guarded. Stairs having four or more risers must have handrails. Guards and rails must withstand 200# of force.

Electrical hazards: damaged wiring, inadequate power, no ground fault circuit interrupters on outlets for power tools or near water.

Garbage and toxic waste: infectious waste (needles, condoms, dead animals, excrement, rodent nests, moldy materials, etc.) or chemical waste (unlabeled containers, toxic substances, etc.).

Lead paint: Buildings built before 1978 are assumed to contain lead paint. Dust, surfaces, and/or chips must be tested. Sanding or demolition of lead-painted surfaces must be done by lead abatement contractors.

Asbestos. Obvious sources of asbestos may include: pipe/furnace insulation, ceiling/acoustic tiles, Transite™ board, vinyl floor tiles, roofing felts, tar paper, old plaster repair compounds, old wiring, etc.

Treated wood. Structural plywood, outdoor wooden fences, decks, playground structures, and picnic tables are costly to remove and too dangerous to cut.

Pest problems: suspect problems if you note live and dead insects, roach bait stations, mouse and rat traps, insect or rodent damage and the like.

Enclosed spaces. Do not work where there are no windows, only one exit and/or no air circulation.

Bathroom facilities: Toilets in sufficient numbers (about one per 20 workers) and water for washing.

Drinking water: In older buildings, buy bottled water if tap water has not been tested and found safe.

Eating areas. A separate clean room should be present for eating and preparing food.

Working alone. At least one other experienced worker or a security guard should be present.

Special problems: Many buildings used for manufacture or storage can be contaminated with dangerous chemical residues.