



## Behind the Scenes—Safety on the Stage

*Dan Davenport, Beaverton School District*

Drama programs, stages and auditoriums can be one of the hardest areas to keep safe. With so many kids and volunteers involved in the production of an event, it's difficult to make sure everybody knows all the rules and proper safety precautions.

The following is an example of the section of a safety manual relating to auditorium and stage safety. It should be used as a guideline in creating and or modifying your existing safety manual.



### Auditorium and Stage Modifications—Set Construction/Stage Extension

Any stage extensions or complex set construction requires a capital improvement request to be sent to facilities for approval. In this request will be a drawing and the structural support plan. If the stage extension/set

construction is complex and facilities, is not willing to approve it, then the drama department will be required to pay for a structural engineer to approve the project.

Any set that extends beyond the fire curtain requires approval from the fire marshal. The drama department will obtain the written approval from the fire marshal prior to construction. Again no objects, including scenery, should block the fire curtain at any time.

During construction of a stage extension the drama department is required to have signs made that identify the area as a construction area and may be unsafe to enter. This will keep others off the extension until the construction is complete.

### Fire Curtains

Nothing can block the path of the fire curtain at any time. Cables and ropes on the fire curtain release lines and roof hatches must be

*(Stage continued on page 3)*

## Combustible Materials in School Buildings

School buildings seem to always collect and display a lot of combustible materials. While displaying artwork and other objects is nice, there are some limits to what is appropriate. Decorating corridors and classrooms should follow a few guidelines to reduce fire hazards. There are two sets of guidelines outlined in this article for buildings with and without sprinkler systems.

Issues:

- Displays of children's artwork and other decorative materials.
- Corridor areas used as work stations for students & teachers.

### Buildings with a fire sprinkler system

When decorating a corridor in a building protected by an automatic fire extinguishing system, follow these guidelines:

- Combustible materials should be limited to 80 square feet.
- Materials must lay flat and be secured against the wall.

- Blank areas of at least 10 feet must separate each display.
- Plastic materials must meet ASTM D-2843 and/or ASTM E-84 requirements.
- Ceilings shall not be decorated with combustible materials.
- Wedging or stopping of automatic self-closing fire rated doors is prohibited.
- Use of corridor area for storage or instructional purposes is prohibited.

Decorating a classroom in a building protected by an automatic fire extinguishing system:

- Combustible materials shall be limited to 80 square feet.

*(Combustibles continued on page 2)*

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## News from the ... OSBA iPACT PROPERTY AND CASUALTY TRUST

### How much does a rock cost?

If it's used to prop open a self-closing door, you can't afford it.

Doors that are self-closing and locking are designed that way for a reason: security, safety, fire control or all three. Yes, self-closing and locking doors can be a hassle. On a daily basis students, faculty, staff are tempted to use a rock or a wedge to prop these doors open. Before you give in to the temptation, or tolerate door-propping, here are some things to consider from a safety and security standpoint:

Unfortunately, crimes occur everywhere. Even the schools that are "in the country" can still be victimized. The crime can be as simple as a theft of a purse, wallet, or computer. It can also be a violent crime such as robbery, assault, or rape. A closed, locked door is a barrier that keeps would-be criminals away from students, staff and valuables. A door that is propped open eliminates that barrier.

Self-closing doors that are regularly propped open will not close properly over time. The door closing hardware is trying to close the door against the rock or the wedge. Over time the door will warp or twist, damaging the hardware. A

door that does not latch is no longer "locked." It becomes an easy target for those who are looking for an easy way to get in quickly, cause their trouble and get out.

Self closing doors are often fire doors or exit doors. They are designed to let students, faculty, staff, and the public out. They are primarily designed to be a barrier to prevent the spread of smoke, heat or fire to other parts of the building. In this way these doors help to compartmentalize a fire to contain or control its spread. A door that is propped open will allow the spread of a fire, smoke or heat into other areas.

From a property standpoint, self-closing doors are meant to limit the size of a loss whether by a crime or a fire. Doors that are continually propped open will need to be replaced sooner, draining resources from the school.

These are good reasons to not prop open a self-closing door. The most important is your safety.

Think about that before you use a rock or wedges to prop open a door.

*(Combustibles continued from page 1)*

- Materials must lay flat and be secured against the wall.
- Breaks of at least 3 feet must separate each display.
- Neither side of door in classroom is to be covered by combustible material.
- Ceilings shall not be decorated with combustible materials.
- Combustible material may be suspended from ceiling but special requirements to need to be met.

#### **Buildings without a fire sprinkler system**

When decorating a corridor in a building not protected by an automatic fire extinguishing system follow these guidelines:

- Combustible materials shall be limited to 40 square feet.
- Materials must lay flat and be secured against the wall.
- Breaks of at least 20 feet must separate each display.
- Plastic materials must meet ASTM D-2843 and/or ASTM E-84 requirements.
- Ceilings shall not be decorated with combustible materials.
- Wedging or stopping of automatic self-closing fire rated doors is prohibited.
- Use of corridor area for storage or instructional purposes is prohibited.

Decorating a classroom in a building not protected by an automatic fire extinguishing system:

- Combustible materials shall be limited to 40 square feet.
- Materials must lay flat and be secured against the wall.
- Breaks of at least 3 feet must separate each display.
- Neither side of door in classroom is to be covered by combustible material.

- Ceilings shall not be decorated with combustible materials
- Combustible material may be suspended from ceiling but special requirements to need to be met.

*Information from Tualatin Valley Fire and Rescue publication, August 2004.*

### **Annual Workshop Changes**

*Dan Davenport, President*

As you all know, the annual workshop is usually held in July in conjunction with the Oregon Association of School Business Officials summer conference. For the past few years attendance has been declining.

Based on comments, workshop evaluations and the board's desire to grow the association, the board has decided to move the annual workshop to October.

We think location is an issue too. So we are looking at a few options in the central Willamette Valley area. As we get more information, we will let you know. It is most important to us to keep our membership in the loop. We also think the annual workshop is too valuable as a professional development option to not try a different approach.

So keep your eyes and ears peeled for more information. As soon as we have a date set, we will send a notice on the Listserv.

If you have any questions don't hesitate to ask any of the board.

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checked on a regular basis for serviceability. Do not block or impede access to the emergency pull pin stations.

### Power Equipment

Prior to any student using power tools (table saw, etc.) the student must pass the woodshop safety instructions and test booklets. The instructor shall maintain records of the students who have completed the woodworking safety test.

Personal protective equipment such as eye protection and wearing appropriate clothing is required at all times while operating power equipment.

Any and all blade guards will remain in place at all times as per the manufacturer guidelines.

**Aerial Lifts** - If the school has a Hi Lift on site an annual inspection is required. This inspection will be paid for by the drama department. On a monthly basis the Hi lift will be inspected by the teacher to ensure all mechanical parts are serviceable. A log book will be maintained on the Hi Lift indicating that the service and monthly inspections have been completed. The Hi Lift, when not in use, will be disabled with a key or other device to prevent unintended uses. Anyone that uses a high lift should be trained.

**Fall Protection** – On a self propelled elevating work platforms the fall protection required is a guardrail, midrail and toe boards.

### Hand Tools

Hand tools are a common theft concern. All hand tools will be secured at all times when not in use, failure to not properly secure equipment may result in the property loss not being covered by risk management.

All hand tools will also be inspected on a regular basis by the drama teacher for serviceability and all tools that are deemed unsafe are to be removed immediately.

### Storage— Costumes

All costumes are to be stored in the safest possible location considering fire safety and general safety. No costumes storage will block fire exits, sprinkler heads or be hung on sprinkler pipes. Costumes must be hung on a rack and not piled in a corner to prevent spontaneous combustion issues.

### Building Materials

All building materials are to be stored in the safest possible location considering fire safety and general safety. No building material will block fire exits or obstruct sprinkler heads. Any building material that is combustible, such as Styrofoam will be stored only in small quantities.

### Rigging

All rigging areas will be kept clear at all times. The goal is for the operator to have clear visibility to see moving parts above and people onstage. Adhere to the posted operating

guidelines at all times. Any rigging defects and or repairs should be noted on the rail log and reported to maintenance within 24 hours.

Modifications to the rigging are not allowed. All rigging should be inspected on annual basis by a certified specialist.

Flown scenery must have appropriate flying hardware and be properly attached. Flown scenery must be built to accommodate the forces incurred in lifting scenery.

Always clearly label the locking rail to communicate conditions with everyone. Ex: “electrical cord attached” indicates to others that a batten has an electrified cord on it and special care is required.

### Lighting

All stage lighting that is secured with a C clamp requires a safety cable at all times.

All stage lighting is required to kept clear of curtains and other combustible products.

No modifications to any lights are allowed by anyone except the maintenance staff.

Keep lights away from the vertical path of an adjacent batten. If unavoidable, tag-out the interfering line set so others do not attempt to move it into harms way.

### Electrical

The State of Oregon requires that only a certified electrician is allowed to do electrical work. No electrical work should ever be completed by students or teachers.

Extension cords are to be used on a temporary basis only. The cords should be grounded and UL listed.

### Fire Marshal

The district enjoys a positive working relation with our fire marshal. The drama department needs to do its part in maintaining that good relationship.

1. Do not have any open flame without first, and only then by, obtaining permission from the fire marshal.
2. Never construct a set that blocks the path of the fire curtain.
3. Do not overload electrical circuits.
4. Do not block aisles or exit ways.
5. Do not cover exit signs.

Visit us on the web  
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The OSSOA Newsletter is produced by the Oregon School Boards Association liaison to the association as a service for the Oregon School Safety Officers Association membership.

Any questions regarding this publication or OSSOA may be answered by calling the OSBA office at (503)588-2800 or by sending an e-mail to [apeterman@osba.org](mailto:apeterman@osba.org).

## Do you have any suggestions? How can we serve you better?

We'd love to hear from you. Members are the driving force behind what associations provide. And we won't know what you think unless you tell us.

If you have a specific service you think the association should be providing, let us know.

If you have issues and topics you'd like the association to cover in the newsletter, let us know.

Please contact any of the board members at any time with your ideas.