

Rackheath Players - Health and Safety Policy

This is the Health and Safety Policy of the Rackheath Players (including Rackheath Youth Theatre).

Its purpose is to ensure that all members of the group, visiting parties and members of the public can operate in a safe environment.

There are three elements involved in the policy. The first is involving rehearsals with members of the group, the second is the performances where other people are in the building with the members and third where the Players are off site for photoshoot or promotional activities. That does not mean that each section can be read in isolation since the individual areas overlap.

Rehearsals / Set Build

1. No member of Rackheath Players should be in the hall alone in case of an accident
2. Working At Height – Common sense should be employed at all times in order to avoid unnecessary risk. In summary:
 - a The climbing of ladders / platforms (or similar) requires a minimum of two people present at all times
 - b Before you start, always ensure that the ladder / platform is solid with no parts missing or broken
 - c Be fully aware of the surroundings in which you are working, avoiding situations that may cause you to lose balance
 - d Be careful; be slow; be methodical
 - e If in doubt, seek assistance.

A 'Working At Height' awareness course is available for anyone within the group or working on behalf of the group and can be accessed via any member of Rackheath Players Committee.

3. The closing and locking up of the hall should be carried out by a minimum two members of the group; no-one should be left alone in the hall unless it is their express wish
4. When leaving the hall, those that remain are responsible for ensuring that all other members are safely to their cars and no-one is left waiting alone for lifts or breakdown assistance
5. Any accidents during rehearsals should be logged in the village hall accident book and appropriate medical action taken if necessary. The Youth Theatre have their own accident book for records as well as the village Hall book
6. The health and safety of the members of the group during rehearsals is collective. Any dangerous or unsafe items should be brought to the attention of the current Director or committee member who will take appropriate action

7. The risk assessment of the stage and rear dressing rooms is the responsibility of the Stage Manager, or Health and Safety Officer during rehearsals and performances.
8. The risk assessments of the front of house which includes the main hall, toilets and bar area are the responsibility of each team leader running each area. There will be a checklist for each area to be completed and filed before each public performance
9. The stage upon completion, during rehearsals and before the cast use the set for the performances must be checked to be safe. If there are issues with stability of the staging this must be brought to the attention of either the construction team, Stage Manager, Director and or Health and Safety Officer. If a conflict of interest arises checking the safety of the set, then a separate member of the group will carry out the risk assessment and submit this for record before the show begins. Unless there is a change in the set construction, or any problem has arisen to the set prior to the next performance inspection once will be sufficient for the run of the shows
10. The fire exits and exits from the stage should always remain clear during rehearsals and performances and will always be checked prior to the curtain up to ensure the escape route is clear and has not been blocked during setting the stage
11. If there is any electrical fault with the lighting only competent people who understand the lighting set up will handle or put right the problems. In the event of not being able to put right a fault, advice will be sought before continuing with the performance with the Stage Manager and front of house
12. Each production will have a set and or props that could be unsafe without proper instruction. Adequate practise and advice will be given to the handling of any equipment such as guns firing blanks or stage weapons that may be used during a performance
13. If the stage has any flats fixed to the side walls their stability will be checked as part of the stage risk assessment. Any dangerous props will be kept safe (and away from children if they are present) by the Stage Manager
14. Any steps will have adequate edging strips to highlight the edge of the step. Handrails are installed to the sides of the steps ascending and descending the stage to the front and back. These should be checked for fixings if members of the cast are to use them. Steps positioned to the front of the stage that are not fixed will fit flush to the stage and will be secure and not move.

Performances

1. The front of house manager and team will be responsible for looking after the health and safety of the audience that are in the building. No responsibility is accepted for incidents in the car park, nor the state and surface of the car park or security of vehicles parked there. Any problems with the exterior of the building and ground are

the responsibility of the Village Hall and will fall under their health and safety policy. If Rackheath Players are aware of a problem, appropriate action will be taken whilst the Rackheath Players activity is going on. These problems will be reported to the Rackheath Village Hall committee

2. The risk assessment of the stage and rear dressing rooms is the responsibility of the Stage Manager, or Health and Safety Officer
3. The main front door will be secured open (weather permitting) to allow easy access into the Village Hall. The front of house crew will ensure before members of the public enter the building that the building is safe for purpose and have completed the front of house checklist
4. The seating inside the hall shall not exceed the maximum defined by the Village Hall - this includes members of the group and helpers. If the capacity of seating is exceeded by the number of tickets sold, refunds will be arranged
5. The Fire Exits will be checked prior to audience members entering the hall to ensure they can be opened easily, and they are not blocked. If set for use, the gantry to the rear of the hall must be checked for safety prior to use. The fire extinguishers will fall under the Village Hall's own safety policy but if Rackheath Players are made aware of a problem Rackheath Players would record this on the risk assessment and inform the Village Hall committee as soon as possible
6. If fire extinguishers are moved as part of a production, it is the responsibility of the Stage Manager to ensure that are placed where they can still be seen and accessed easily, and their temporary position highlighted to the cast/crew. The Stage Manager will ensure that the fire extinguishers are returned to their normal places at the end of each show
7. Seats will be laid out in a safe and responsible way. The aisles will be positioned so there is adequate width to allow escape from fire and wheelchair access should this be needed. The seats on the rostra which are above ground level will be checked for stability and if there are any concerns, they must be brought to the attention of the front of house manager. The edges of the rostra where they ascend between levels will have high visibility edging to ensure the difference in level is clearly shown. The edges of the rostra will be protected by railings which will ensure that the chairs and persons will not topple off the edges
8. Before the performance begins, the health and safety announcement will clearly state the evacuation procedure in the event of an emergency. The front of house manager or designated member of Rackheath players will take control of the audience evacuation by ensuring the house lights are put on if time allows (fire signs are in constant illumination), call the emergency services if needed and try to ensure everyone is kept calm. The toilets should be checked as part of the evacuation

9. Should there be an emergency on stage then the Stage Manager, Health and Safety Officer or designated member of the Rackheath Players' team will ensure the members of the cast are safely evacuated from the backstage area. Members of the cast that might be in the audience or front of the stage should follow the instructions of the front of house evacuation procedure and should not return backstage. Wherever possible, all members should be aware of all the cast and crew members present
10. All performances will have a first aider present where possible. Should there not be a first aider present at any performance there will be an announcement made to state that any medical complaints or accidents other than the use of a plaster will need to be medically assessed and that advice will be taken from the NHS 111 or 999 services. In the event of any trip or fall where the person has received or taken a blow to the head or where blood loss is visible and may require stitching, an ambulance will be called. In the event of the casualty having an injury to their neck first aiders will only move the casualty in accordance with first aid guidelines and will keep them in their original position unless obstruction to the airways is noted and without being moved may cause loss of life
11. Rackheath Players cannot accept any medical liability for first aid performed by our or any other first aider that has offered to help at the injury and if the first aider does not feel comfortable administering volunteer first aid then an ambulance will be called. Where we feel that medical advice or intervention is needed but has been ignored by the patient, we cannot accept liability for this later if we have done all we can at the time of incident
12. All accidents must be recorded in the Village Hall accident book. Accidents involving the Youth Theatre will be logged in the Village Hall and their own accident book. An advisory sheet has been prepared for parents should the child receive a minor blow to the head during rehearsals.

Offsite

1. When Rackheath Players or Rackheath Youth Theatre are together as a group on another premises or excursion where there is a Health & Safety policy in place then we shall adhere to this as much as possible where it is made public or briefed in any address
2. If an accident occurs while in other surroundings then the accident book in that location should be filled in at the time of the accident and the advice of the medical first aider on location should be taken into consideration and followed as a matter of procedure to assist with their accident policy and insurance
3. If we are in a location where there is no policy in place, then we must all assume a collective responsibility for each other's health and safety wherever possible

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4. A small medical kit with basic supplies and all the contact details of the Youth Theatre should be taken on any outside excursions to help in the event of an emergency. The person holding the data for these children will only have the details relevant to contact those in an emergency such as telephone numbers of parents or emergency contacts listed which will include first name and telephone number. There is no need to include home addresses or emails to avoid excess data being held while on location
5. General health and safety practices should take place when out and about and if anyone sees any potential hazards or dangers these should be brought to the attention of managers in a public place or avoided where possible
6. In the event of an emergency if the group consists of the adult members then we assume responsibility for ourselves and others where possible
7. When the children are under our supervision then they must be made aware of what to do in the event of an emergency, where to go to as a meeting point should they get lost or separated from each other during the event
8. A head count or register should be taken before and after the event and any incidents that during an external visit should be reported to the person collecting them or via a message or phone call at the time should the matter be serious enough.

Where relevant, this document will be read in conjunction with the Village Hall's Health and Safety Policy and should we feel there are any issues with safety we will bring them to the attention of the Village Hall Committee at the earliest opportunity.

COVID ADDENDUM

As the Coronavirus pandemic demonstrated, even the most comprehensive H&S policy cannot cater for all eventualities. However, in keeping with the purpose of our H&S policy ('to ensure that all members of the group, visiting parties and members of the public can operate in a safe environment'), the *spirit* of this policy means that – when appropriate – we will fully embrace and adopt any public health guidelines and/or laws issued by local or national government.

Dated	01/08/2019
Revised	07/04/2021
Reviewed	06/09/2023
Further revision	10/01/2024
Minor revision	01/09/2025

This Policy will be reviewed in February 2027.