

RISK ASSESSMENT GENERAL FIRE PERFORMANCE

(Last updated 21/11/13 © Circus Malabaristas Ltd)

Authority

In writing this risk assessment we have made reference to the Health & Safety Executive (HSE) website. Specifically we have referred to the following web pages or documents:

<http://www.hse.gov.uk/risk/fivesteps.htm>

<http://www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/indg163.pdf>

Risk Assessment – Definition

‘A risk assessment is simply a careful examination of what, in your work, could cause harm to people, so that you can weigh up whether you have taken enough precautions or should do more to prevent harm. Workers and others have a right to be protected from harm caused by a failure to take reasonable control measures.’ *HSE*

Interpretation

The process of identifying hazards and assessing risks is universal in making any risk assessment or method statement. However the HSE does not provide any specific guidance or examples related to circus performance, fire skills or other associated practices. We have therefore had to interpret the guidance that is given on the HSE website to write this method statement and its associated risk assessment.

Please see <http://www.hse.gov.uk/risk/casestudies/> to illustrate the limited information provided by the HSE in regard to circus risk assessments and <http://www.hse.gov.uk/risk/faq.htm> and <http://www.hse.gov.uk/construction/safetytopics/assess.htm#meth> for the limited information on method statements.

Generality

All our risk assessments (and method statements) are general ones based on years of experience in providing performers and tutors who deliver the skill/s stated. We are happy to ask the performer or tutor to provide site specific risk assessments or method statements but any such risk assessments or method statements will be charged for in addition to any performance or tutor fees.

Applicability

This risk assessment is only applicable if it has been supplied by us as part of the contractual process for booking an act or artist and which relates to the specific skill/s contained herein. The venue/location and responsible person/s which the risk assessment relates to are the ones in that contract.

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Family and Children’s Entertainment ~ Themed Events ~ Corporate Functions

All our acts have Public Liability Insurance, are CRB checked where required and are trained professional performers

Disclaimer

All performers supplying the skills are self-employed freelance artists. We supply this general risk assessment (and its associated method statement document) in consultation with them and to which they agree to conform to. However we are not responsible for any failures of the artist/s to comply with this general risk assessment (or the associated method statement); health and safety good practice or legal requirements.

If you require clarification of any part of this method statement or require a site specific one please contact us.

Terminology

Hazard/Risk

In following the guidance of the HSE we use the following meanings

- a **hazard** is anything that may cause harm, such as chemicals, electricity, working from ladders, an open drawer, etc.; and
- the **risk** is the chance, high or low, that somebody could be harmed by these and other hazards, together with an indication of how serious the harm could be.

Skills/Performance/Props

In the following document we use the following meanings regarding the skills used, performance activity and props.

- Fire Performer means the performer or artist who performs the skills outlined below.
- Fire Performing means various fire skills that can include (but is not limited to):
 - Fire juggling – the throwing and catch of fire props usually fire torches
 - Fire spinning or twirling – the spinning or twirling of fire props in the hands and around the body. The fire props involved are usually fire poi, fire staffs and fire swinging clubs
 - Fire eating – the extinguishing of fire using the mouth
 - Fire breathing – the production of a flame by spraying fuel onto a lit fire prop
- Fire Props or Equipment means the items used by the artist in performing their skill.

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Harm Levels

In the following document we use the following meanings regarding harm level and chance of harm (the HSE gives no guidance as to assessing harm levels or chance of harm for circus activities and therefore these are including based on our experience and information from tutors).

Although as the HSE states, any hazards and harm there caused can result in death, a reasonable assessment has to be made based on all factors involved with the hazard. The below harm levels have been used in this document.

1. Extreme – level of injury that includes death
2. Severe – level of injury that includes substantial injury such as broken limbs
3. Substantial – level of injury that may require emergency hospital attendance such as severe cuts
4. Significant – level of injury that requires first aid such as cuts and bad bruising
5. Minimal – level of injury that is minor such as minor skin abrasions or bruises

Chance of Harm

The chance of any harm caused by a hazard depends on a number of factors. The assessment in this document is based on our experience and the tutors we consult with.

1. Very likely
2. Likely
3. 50/50 chance
4. Unlikely
5. Very unlikely

This risk assessment follows the guidance set out in the above mentioned HSE documents.

Summary process is as follows. Please use the links to go to each section

1. [Identify the hazards](#)
2. [Decide who might be harmed and how](#)
3. [Evaluate the risks and decide on precaution](#)
4. [Record your findings and implement them](#)
5. [Review your assessment and update if necessary](#)

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1. Identify the Hazards

1.1. General

General hazards are any hazards that may be present at the location where the fire performance will be conducted. The following list gives examples but is not exhaustive. Further identification of hazards may be required on site.

- 1.1.1. Surface upon which the fire performance is conducted. The surface must be suitable for the skill being undertaken. For example a slippery floor is not suitable for fire performance.
- 1.1.2. The area/space available for the fire performance. The space available for the fire performance may limit where the activity can take place. For example the space must be large enough to ensure the public are kept at a safe distance.
- 1.1.3. The area/space must have barriers in place to prevent public encroachment on the area and/or the audience is able to be informed that they must remain in a specific area.
- 1.1.4. If the space for performance is indoors then liaison with the venue safety officer is required.
- 1.1.5. Overhead hazards such as lights, wires, or other obstruction. Hazard identification especially important indoors.
- 1.1.6. The weather at the time of the fire performance. Inclement weather may make fire performance hazardous. For example fire performance props may slip from the fire performer's hand/s.

1.2. Specific

Specific hazards are any hazards that relate to the use of specific type of fire performance equipment, fire performance act or costume. The list below details examples of these but is not exhaustive. Specific additions to this general document can be supplied for specific acts. For details of fire equipment used please see above.

1.2.1. Costumes

- 1.2.1.1. Fire performers wear clothing suitable for unrestricted movement.

1.2.2. Props

- 1.2.2.1. Props vary in their hazard level. Examples are given below but the list is not exhaustive.

1.2.2.1.1. Fire torches (juggling)

- 1.2.2.1.1.1. Can be dropped and land where they may ignite flammable materials
- 1.2.2.1.1.2. Can strike a person or property if they slip out of the performer's hand

1.2.2.1.2. Fire Poi (spinning or twirling)

- 1.2.2.1.2.1. Can strike a person or property if too close to either.
- 1.2.2.1.2.2. Cannot slip from performer's grasp or be dropped in normal safe use as they are attached to a performer with finger loops

1.2.2.1.3. Fire Staff (spinning or twirling)

- 1.2.2.1.3.1. Can strike a person or property if too close to either
- 1.2.2.1.3.2. Can slip from performer's grasp and strike a person or property

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- 1.2.2.1.3.3. Can be dropped and ignite flammable material
- 1.2.2.1.4. Fire Eating
 - 1.2.2.1.4.1. No hazards for public or property of general control measures followed
- 1.2.2.1.5. Fire Breathing
 - 1.2.2.1.5.1. Flame created can ignite flammable material if too close.
 - 1.2.2.1.5.2. Flame can injure member of public if too close.

Please see section 3 below for more general risk control measures. For harm level and chance of harm please see [here](#)

2. Decide Who Might Be Harmed and How

The presence of a fire performance activity may harm the following groups of people or individuals

2.1. Public

The public, but specifically members of the public who are present in the immediate vicinity of the fire performer may be affected by consequences of fire performance activity. The harm level of fire performance can be extreme. However fire performance in normal performance circumstances would be rated at a harm level of significant to severe

2.1.1 Harm Level – Significant to Severe

2.1.2 Chance of Harm – Very Unlikely

2.2 Performer

The performer/s can be affected by the hazards related to fire performance.

2.2.1 Harm Level – Minimal to Severe

2.2.2 Chance of Harm – Unlikely

3. Evaluate the risks and decide on precautions

Evaluating the risks in fire performance activities is based on our experience in successfully providing fire performers for many years and the use of best practice. The law requires the performer to do everything 'reasonably practicable' to protect people from harm.

3.1. Performance

Control measures to reduce potential harm to the public for fire performers are:

3.1.1. Fire performance

- 3.1.1.1. Fire performance should be conducted in an area where there is enough space for the activity to take place safely.
- 3.1.1.2. Fire performance should be conducted in a controlled space. Examples of a controlled space include an area is cordoned off or the performance is done on a stage.
- 3.1.1.3. Fire performers should stop fire performance if they are unsure of whether the space they are performing in is safe.
- 3.1.1.4. All props should be thoroughly extinguished after use.
- 3.1.1.5. All fire performance requires the props and the fuel to be kept in a safe area away from the immediate fire performance area. Fuel must be kept in prescribed containers and props must be kept in metal containers when not in use as far as is

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possible (some large props cannot be kept in metal containers but must be kept in a safe area away from the public)

3.1.2. Interaction

3.1.2.1. Interacting with the public should be conducted at all times only when it is safe to do so.

3.1.2.2. Ongoing assessment of the proximity of members of the public should be carried out to ensure that people, especially children to not encroach on the safe performance area.

3.1.2.3. Ongoing assessment of any activity involving interaction with the public where people are acting in a manner which could risk fire performance props striking a person, being dropped or otherwise causing a hazard.

3.2. Performers

Control measures for the performers for fire performers are:

3.2.1. Equipment

3.2.1.1. All fire performance equipment should be checked prior to use

3.2.1.2. All fire performance equipment should be checked after use to check for damage or other conditions which require repair or adjustment.

3.2.2. Costume

3.2.2.1. All fire performance costumes should be checked prior to use

3.2.2.2. All fire performance costumes should be checked after use for damage or other issues which may require repair or adjustment

3.2.3. Training

3.2.3.1. All fire performers are qualified or experienced in providing fire performance.

4. Record your findings and implement them

4.1. General risk assessment

4.1.1. This general risk assessment details the findings of the hazards and the risks involved in fire performance based on our experience supplying fire performers and the views of the professional fire performance performers we provide and consult with.

4.2. Site specific risk assessment

4.2.1. Performers will conduct a brief on site risk assessment at the venue to ensure the following:

4.2.1.1. The client has provided a suitable space/area for the fire performance.

4.2.1.2. The client has provided suitable adult helpers/assistants if agreed prior to the event.

4.2.2. If a detailed site specific risk assessment is required prior to the event this can be conducted by the performer or other suitable person. This will, however, be charged in addition to any fee for the fire performance at the event.

5. Review your assessment and update if necessary

5.1. Our general risk assessments for fire performance are reviewed on a regular basis and are informed by any general changes in the provision of such performances, feedback from performers.

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- 5.2. Site specific risk assessments for fire performance are reviewed on a regular basis and are informed by specific feedback from performers.
- 5.3. Unless otherwise required our review process is on a yearly basis.

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