

INDUSTRY WIDE LABOR-MANAGEMENT SAFETY COMMITTEE

SAFETY BULLETIN #30

RECOMMENDED GUIDELINES FOR SAFELY WORKING WITH EDGED, PIERCING AND PROJECTILE PROPS

These guidelines are intended to provide recommendations on the safe handling, use and storage of edged, piercing, and projectile props (hereinafter referred to as Props). These Props include, but are not limited to: knives, swords, razors, darts, bows and arrows, hatchets, saws, spears, martial arts throwing stars, cross bows and other objects launched mechanically, or by hand, including paintballs and pellets.

Responsible Person

A “Responsible Person” is someone who through experience or training is able to recognize and resolve problems relating to the safe operation and handling of Props.

Depending on the type and use of Props required for the production, and after consultation with one or more of the following personnel: Property Master, Stunt Coordinator, Special Effects Coordinator, Producer, First Assistant Director, Production Safety Representative, and/or any other necessary parties, a Responsible Person (or Persons) shall be assigned to oversee the safe use and operation of Props.

Authority

The Responsible Person will have the authority over the following operations, including, but not limited to:

- Designating individuals under the Responsible Person’s supervision to assist as necessary;
- Removing a malfunctioning Prop from service;
- Determining whether an actor, or other, has experience in the safe handling of the Prop;
- Ensuring performers are educated or comfortable in the functionality or operation and potential hazards associated with the Prop; and
- Exercising the authority to abort the use of a Prop.

Responsibilities

The Responsible Person or designated individual should do the following:

1. Ensure proper storage, possession, control and distribution of all Props on the set, whether company owned, rented, or privately owned. Be qualified to work with the types of Props being used, and be knowledgeable in their handling, use and safekeeping. If unfamiliar with a Prop, expert advice should be sought.
2. Use simulated or dummy Props whenever possible.
3. Adhere to all manufacturers and Authority Having Jurisdiction requirements regarding transportation, storage and use of Props.
4. Ensure performers are instructed in the functionality operation, and potential hazards associated with the Prop.
5. Inspect each Prop before and after each use, as necessary.
6. Retain possession of all props except during actual filming or rehearsal. Account for each prop before personnel are allowed to leave the area. The production company should allow time in its schedule for this procedure.
7. Clean, check and inventory each Prop before the close of each day's shooting.

Prior to Rehearsal and Filming

- Maintain all safety devices and guards (such as sheathes) in place, until the Prop is about to be used
- Inspect the area in which the action is to be rehearsed or filmed, with special attention to the surfaces on which the performers will be standing, to identify and mitigate potential hazards
- Prior to rehearsing the action, inform the cast and crew of the safety precautions to be observed, including their positions during rehearsing and filming.

Safety Meeting

The First Assistant Director should, along with the Responsible Person and other necessary personnel, conduct a safety meeting with cast and crew prior to working around Props.

Make cast and crew aware of the Responsible Person (or designee) authorized to handle the Props.

Safety meeting topics may include, but are not limited to:

- Communicating to all involved personnel, including performers, the intended action, need for increased awareness, possible changes, any visual or audio signals to be used;
- After each use, no one shall approach or enter the area in which edged, piercing or projectile Props are in use other than the Responsible Person(s), until it is declared safe. This includes testing, rehearsals and filming.
- Identify cast, including Background Performers, that are authorized to use a Prop.

The Responsible Person should be notified of any changes or concerns in the use of the Props, action of the cast or crew, or placement of equipment in order to determine whether an additional safety meeting is necessary.

Safe Use and Handling of Props

- Real or fake Props shall be strong enough that they will not accidentally break into dangerous pieces when being used for their intended purpose. It is best to use dulled or blunted Props made to order for use as Props, as dulling a sharp Prop can lessen its tensile strength. Sharpened Props should only be used when the appearance of cutting or piercing cannot be otherwise simulated. Sharpened Props should only be used by those trained, qualified, or experienced in the use of the Prop.
- Props used to strike other weapons or other hard surfaces should be made of steel or high-tensile aluminum. The use of fiberglass Props in such situations should be avoided.
- The use of a rubber “double” should be considered, depending on the action, and after consultation with the Responsible Person.
- The use of Props should be limited to filming and rehearsals supervised by qualified personnel. Use these Props only for their intended purpose. Do not engage in, or permit, horseplay or target practice on or off the set.
- Never allow the dry fire of archery equipment.
- No person is to be coaxed, coerced or forced into handling these Props.

- Consult the Responsible Person or designee, First Assistant Director, Production Safety Representative or Stunt Coordinator, if you have any doubts or questions about the proper handling of these Props. Actors and others who will handle an edged, piercing or projectile Prop, and claim prior knowledge, will be required to demonstrate their experience in the safe handling of the Prop to one of the persons listed in the preceding sentence.
- Know where and what your target is at all times. Do not release the Prop unless you have a clear view of your target.
- Identify the individual designated to cue the use of a Prop. Use a cue that can be recognized even during photography. Never propel a Prop until you receive the designated cue. Always have an agreed upon abort signal, in case it is necessary to abort the use of a Prop.
- Report any malfunctions of equipment to the Responsible Person or designee immediately. Do not attempt to adjust, modify or repair equipment yourself. It is best to have a duplicate immediately available. Malfunctioning equipment should be taken out of service until properly repaired by a person qualified to do so.
- Never lay down or leave these Props unattended. Unless actively filming or rehearsing, all Props should be secured by the Responsible Person.
- Cast and crew should use appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE) when exposed to these Props.

All state and federal safety regulations are applicable and override these guidelines if they are more stringent.

Additional Considerations

Allow sufficient time to train performers and to rehearse the action so that everyone involved knows what their part in the action will be.

- Keep all non-essential personnel out of the rehearsal area.