

Ask The Event Production Experts Column

Safety Issues

By James Moore, Mike Jorgensen & Terry Onustack, CMP

Each issue, we try to answer your production-related questions – from logistics to creative and beyond. We find the answers and share the tricks of the trade to help you be better prepared for your next big event. No question is too small to handle. Please submit your queries to us at: info@moorepresentations.com.



Dear Producers,

Question: What are some of the bigger safety issues to consider in regards to staging and production?

Answer: Imagine this scenario: The show is about to begin. You don your headset and hear the director say, "Stand by... VP on stage... Go..."

The Vice President of Marketing trots toward the stage. The walk-on music plays and the audience of just under 1,000 people is waiting. The VP takes the steps and suddenly trips. She lands hard on the top step and the audience gasps.

Fortunately, you wake up and realize it was all just a dream, but you quickly begin to think about your upcoming show and start going over in your head the precautions you must take to ensure this calamity does not happen in reality.

There are many safety issues to be tended to in preparation for a stage presentation. Here are a few key items we feel meeting planners and show producers should keep in mind when planning an event.

1. With so many cables and wires running throughout the venue, make certain cable runs do not present a tripping hazard. Any cables that cross a door must either run over the top of the doorway or be completely taped to the floor - preferably under a removable threshold.
2. Tape the edges of the stage and the front of all stairs with white tape to make certain speakers and talent clearly see the edge. Steps should have a rise of 6-8 inches and a depth of 12-15 inches.
3. When possible, position someone in the wings or near the stairs to the stage to help guide people and lend a hand when they climb up and down the steps.
4. Maneuvering backstage amongst equipment and cabling is tricky. Mark and light clear pathways for presenters and crew members. Dim, safety lights can be used and draped appropriately as to not diminish the quality of the on-screen lighting.

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Membership Update - continued from previous page

New Member Orientation is held at EVERY monthly program. Either before the Chapter meeting, or immediately after. Please join us to hear from an experienced member on how to become involved in the chapter.

Attend monthly programs and social events. These are held the final Tuesday of each month. They bring many chapter members together for an educational program and a delectable meal. Want to catch up with a member in person? No better way than do meet them at the MPIWSC chapter meeting. The MPIWSC chapter also has "strictly social" events - a \$5 donation is suggested. They are held in the evenings at venues that may not be ideal for a large sit down event, but are great for our smaller networking gatherings.

Get involved in a chapter committee or program. Can't make it to a monthly program or a social event? No worries. You can choose your own level of involvement by joining one of the many chapter committees. There are more committees than I can describe and they include a variety of time commitment opportunities for involvement. Participating on a committee is a great way to meet people over the phone, or in a more active working relationship. Even if you happen to be a bit isolated from the rest of the chapter by schedule or geography, we have a committee for you that can help you utilize a hidden talent or be exposed to a world you would not otherwise know. (See the March/April 2008 Newsletter for current committee information.)

Attend educational events. Our chapter is dedicated in helping you continue your education. Pursue your CMP, CMM, or other designated levels of meeting education with the help of MPI. There are also regional events with the Oregon Chapter, as well as National and International conferences to attend.

All said and done, your MPI membership is what you make it. But rest assured the chapter leadership wants to make it easy for you to get the most from your membership and enjoy it along the way! Please see the MPIWSC website www.mpiwsc.org for more information on events and program dates. ♦

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5. Do not cover Exit signs with drape or décor items. The fire marshal is very insistent about this one and those signs, although sometimes annoying, can help save lives in an emergency.

6. Make certain all scenery or props are secured. When working outdoors, use sandbags and other weights to keep screens, drapery and props from being blown over by high winds.

7. Place props a safe distance from lighting fixtures. Lights become very hot and may start a fire if not kept at a proper distance.

Most importantly, make certain to think through safety issues when planning an event. It will make sleeping the night before a little bit easier.♦

Editor's note: James Moore, president of Moore Presentations, has worked in event production for more than 25 years. Mike Jorgensen, Senior Project Director for Moore Presentations, has more than 20 years experience in multi-media technology. Visit the website at www.moorepresentations.com. Terry Onustack, CMP, Meetings and Education Manager for IASP – a medical research association – worked in corporate meetings for nearly 15 years.