

This information has been adapted from *Safety Guidelines for the Entertainment Industry* published by Australian Entertainment Industry Association (AEIA) and Media Entertainment and Arts Alliance (MEAA).

All employers, managers or organisations must:

- have policies and procedures that aim to protect the health and safety of all persons frequenting the workplace
- ensure such policies and procedures are documented and available to all persons in the workplace
- undertake risk assessments to identify hazards and implement appropriate control measures

## 1. Roles and responsibilities

Ensuring the work health and safety (WHS) of participants or students in class, rehearsal and performance is a shared responsibility involving teachers/leaders, visitors, business owners, venues and contractors. Anyone teaching dance must make sure that, as much as possible, their activities and equipment are not likely to result in damage, either physical or psychological, to themselves, to others or to their working environment.

Teachers must:

- work in a healthy and safe manner, and encourage others to do the same
- ensure they do not endanger any other person through any act or omission at work
- follow WHS policies and procedures of each particular establishment
- cooperate, consult on and promote WHS and welfare matters in the studio, classroom or performance space
- report and work to rectify (where possible) any hazards within the studio, classroom or performance space
- report any injuries or incidents to the senior teacher/business owner/venue operator as soon as possible after the incident
- ensure that correct use is made of all equipment including First Aid supplies
- ensure that they are not, by the consumption of alcohol or any other drug, in a state that may endanger their own safety or the safety of any other person in the dance environment
- cooperate with any investigating authorities

An employer may contract out certain WHS tasks but it remains their responsibility to:

- be aware of the legal obligations in respect of WHS at all times
- ensure that all teachers and volunteers are aware of all hazards that may impact upon themselves, the students and other staff, and what risk control measures are in place for their protection
- ensure that all individuals are involved in developing a safe and healthy working environment through appropriate mutually-agreed consultation processes, such as an WHS committee or WHS representatives
- ensure that suitably qualified and competent personnel are able to take care of all aspects of the lesson, rehearsal or event, that they are aware of their responsibilities and willing to comply with all relevant legislation
- ensure an emergency and evacuation plan is in place and clear to all

## 2. Reporting accidents, injuries or incidents

If you, a participant or a student has an accident, gets injured or sick during a lesson, rehearsal or performance, no matter how slight, you should:

- Report the incident to the senior teacher, business owner or venue manager and, if appropriate, to a parent of the student.
- Record all details of the incident. An injuries register should be available to all teachers and employees.
- Do not disturb the scene of the accident unless you judge that it may jeopardise the safety of other people in the area.
- For incidents involving members of the public, an 'incident form' should be filled out by the senior teacher/business owner/venue manager.
- If you witness an accident, inform senior teacher/business owner/venue manager.
- If there is any dispute or problem, report the incident to the WHS committee or representative. If unresolved, or in the absence of a WHS committee or representative, refer to the relevant statutory authority such as WorkCover organisation for your state; for employers—[MEAA](#); for employees—[Live Performance Australia](#)
- Where worker's compensation may be payable, the employer should notify the organisation's workers compensation insurer within 48 hours.

- If the injury or illness leads to medical expenses or time off work or school, it is the responsibility of the injured individual to complete the relevant workers' compensation/insurance documentation.

### **3. Safety induction**

All employees and volunteers should be given an induction at each studio/space/classroom in which they will perform duties.

Inductions should include:

- location of safe access and exit points
- location of facilities and amenities
- location of WHS equipment including personal protective equipment
- identification of first aid and emergency equipment
- information about evacuation procedures
- recognition and use of fire extinguishers
- information about any crucial workplace-specific procedures
- location of Emergency Contacts and Procedures instructions

The business owner, senior teacher or venue manager must provide a list of emergency contact numbers and an outline of emergency procedures.

When telephoning for assistance during an emergency, state:

- that it is an emergency
- your name and exact location
- as much detail as possible about the accident or situation

and make sure that the information has been received correctly and will be acted upon immediately.

### **4. Risk assessment**

Employers and teachers should undertake a risk assessment, considering every aspect of a dance lesson, rehearsal or performance, and every person involved. It is good practice to document any risks identified and the agreed measures for eliminating or decreasing any risk.

If an identified risk or hazard cannot be eliminated or removed:

- substitute a less hazardous activity/object/substance
- minimise the hazard through re-design
- rearrange the activity/training to reduce exposure/risk
- use personal protective equipment/clothing e.g. knee pads, ankle strap

A teacher or choreographer should know which exercises or movements are safe to teach and which are potentially harmful, particularly if a student is suffering from an injury, a health issue or is at particularly vulnerable stage of physical or psychological development. It is good practice for teachers to ask their students if there are any injuries they should be aware of before a class commences.

Teachers need to be aware of a range of potential risk factors:

- has there been adequate warming up time?
- has the participant or student had sufficient training to undertake a particular movement?
- is this exercise or movement potentially harmful?
- how many times has the participant or student executed the movement?
- have there been adequate rest/drink breaks?
- is the environment safe/suitable?

If you are working in a potentially dangerous place (i.e. outside or in an unfamiliar environment) and you are concerned, you should ask if a risk assessment has been undertaken. If the company or organisation refuses to do one, or to voluntarily disclose the results, you should contact your WHS committee or representative, or the relevant statutory authority.

## **5. Work time**

There is legislation in force that governs the maximum amount of time which employees can be required to work, although it is subject to exceptions.

As well as employing risk-management procedures as outlined below, teachers of dance must:

- include appropriate warm-up and warm-down activities

- adapt the exercises or activities to match students' age, strength, flexibility and coordination
- ensure that the floor is 'area elastic' and does not present unnecessary risks
- check that the space is clean and clear of obstacles (especially electrical ones)
- ensure adequate ventilation and that temperatures are within the recommendations

In dance classes or rehearsals, the potential for injury tends to increase:

- during sessions in which students experiment with movement that requires a high degree of control, strength or coordination e.g. lifts, jumps
- when students are tired, stressed or ill
- if the floor or floor surface is substandard
- if a student is wearing jewellery
- if a student is chewing gum or food
- if the space is insufficient for the number of students
- when students have been over-worked
- when wearing loose clothing, incorrect shoes or using unsuitable props

## **6. Checklist**

- know the safety aspects of your studio/classroom/workplace
- observe all warning signs and instructions
- observe restrictions on smoking, alcohol and other drugs
- ensure you have read and understood the safety induction information you have been given
- only use equipment you are authorised and competent to use
- wear and use appropriate clothing, footwear and safety equipment
- take appropriate measures in emergencies
- ensure first aid is provided promptly
- report all incidents, injuries and other emergencies
- be aware of any disability, injury or any other factors that may affect the capacity of students or yourself, and implement appropriate modifications
- strictly observe policies regarding children and your role in the absence of parents i.e. Duty of Care

- understand that wilful damage to equipment and disobeying health and safety regulations could result in grounds for dismissal
- understand that communication is important—between students, parents, colleagues, senior staff

Good management and risk planning will reduce incidents in the dance studio and workplace.