

# Insurance: Points to Ponder

by Ken Roberts



## Safety Issues: The Little Things We Can Do

In an earlier article, we discussed the various emergency management tools and techniques that many insurance underwriters look for, such as emergency lighting, alarm systems, evacuation plans and “panic” hardware on all public exits. They, like us, want to make sure that everything possible is done to ensure the safety of our patrons, staff and volunteers. While all of those things are great ideas, they’re not always financially feasible for many of our new and fledgling theatres. Many new organizations may need to rent or lease space from owners who will neither install those features nor allow the theatre to do it. What it all comes down to, is that even if we are not able to have the state-of-the-art facilities that our underwriters wish we had, there are still things we can do to help maintain the safety of our venues that won’t break the bank.

We in the theatre world are a cre-

ative group of folks, and I have seen more than my share of creative solutions to the most common hazards we face in our venues. Our performance venues need to be dark for us to create the proper atmospheres for our productions, and this creates one of our greatest hazards. Backstage spaces, as well as aisles in some theatres can be lit with dimmable strings of Christmas lights to keep the necessary areas lit well enough to protect actors and patrons from running into walls or falling.

Any abrupt change in elevation, such as where two different concrete slabs come together or where floor trim for carpeting or flooring is necessary, can be pointed out with proper signage, or by painting a fluorescent yellow stripe on the upper step. Anything that can be done to draw attention to those areas before an accident happens can save a lot of headaches.

What theatre would be complete without an assortment of gaffer’s tape? Even though it may not be a permanent solution, nor the most aesthetically pleasing one, tears or rolled up corners or seams on rugs and carpeting can and should be taped down before someone trips and injures themselves. There’s certain to be a color that can be coordinated with your carpeting until the proper repairs can be made.

The point to all of this is that even without having the latest and greatest of modern technology to help us make our theatres safer, there are plenty of little things that we can do that won’t drive us to bankruptcy. We can help to protect everyone in our facilities and demonstrate to insurance companies that we are contributing to a safer environment, and the latter can make a difference when it’s time to purchase our coverage.

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