

The Basics

If your show calls for weapons there are a few things to consider before embarking on the process of adding them to the show.

All weapons are just that, WEAPONS. They should at ALL TIMES be treated as such.

Having a weapons policy in place to establish safe handling protocols and storage will help guarantee the safety of the actors, the stage crew, the audience and the weapon itself.

This brochure is a condensed version of a theatrical weapons policy used by LORT and University theatres and a starting place for creating a policy to be used in storing and handing weapons in the rehearsal hall and onstage.



Utah Shakespeare Festival

What is S*P*A*M?

S*P*A*M (The Society of Properties Artisan Managers) is an association of not-for-profit professional Prop Managers and Educators.

For more information

An example of a weapons policy can be found in *The Properties Director's Handbook* by Sandra Strawn. It is in the chapter titled "The Production Tech Process: Opening and Run". The book with this chapter and example policy can be found at prophandbook.com.

For a more detailed weapons policy please contact S*P*A*M at www.propmasters.org.



German Maxim Machine Gun
Built by Christopher Kesel at Opera San Jose



Visit our website at
www.propmanagers.org

WEAPONS BEST PRACTICES FOR THE STAGE

Best practices for the safe operation, care, storage and use of weapons on stage.



Weapons care & storage

Weapons should be stored in a dry, locked room or cabinet in compliance with safety and access requirements of local authorities and regulations.

Weapons should be unloaded, inspected for damage, cleaned/oiled and appropriately maintained prior to storage.

Only the Properties Manager and Production Director should have keys to the weapon storage. Keys should be kept on their person or stored in a secure location.

Utilize a check out sheet for each weapon removed from weapons storage designating what weapon was removed and who is responsible for it. Anyone accepting responsibility for a weapon should sign the checkout sheet acknowledging they understand the weapons policy and will adhere to that agreement.

A trained and licensed gunsmith should complete any repairs or alteration to a blank firing firearm. The mechanism for firing has small tolerance for alteration and should be adjusted or modified only with appropriate training and experience.

Routine maintenance should be performed on all weapons on an annual basis. This includes cleaning and oiling firearms and oiling bladed weapons. Maintaining and updating an inventory sheet with maintenance notation allows for accurate management of the weapons stock.

Weapons in Rehearsal

Weapons should be stored in a dry, locked room or cabinet in a location immediately accessible to the rehearsal hall. The cabinet should be kept locked at all times except when weapons are being accessed.

Weapons should **ONLY** be handled by Stage Management, the stage crew member charged with the care and distribution of the weapons, the actor who is cast to handle the weapon or the Properties Manager.

When using a blank firing weapon, the Properties Manager, Fight Director, Stage Manager, and Director should conduct a paper test **PRIOR** to the start of the rehearsal to assure safe distances for powder and wadding discharge and acoustics.

Prior to tech, the Properties Manager should perform a “live fire” demonstration (in the rehearsal hall or onstage) so the entire cast can experience the sound level and any questions or concerns can be addressed.

Proper training is essential for anyone handling a firing weapon. Appropriate accommodations should be used (earplugs, revised blocking, or smaller load) as needed. No actor should be pushed into using a firing weapon if they are uncomfortable with it or feel unsafe.

No retractable blade weapons should be used in any fight choreography. Most are prone to breakage and inconsistent in “action”.

The production team should prepare alternatives in the event of weapon misfire or breakage.

Weapons in Show

Weapons should be stored in a locked cabinet. Stage Management on stage should have the key on their person.

Weapons should **NEVER** be left unattended for **ANY** amount of time. Each weapon – real or fake (including non-firing replicas) – should be issued by the run crew member charged as Weapons Master at the last available opportunity before it appears on stage and collected by that crew member at the earliest available opportunity after it leaves the stage.

Load weapons as close to firing time as is possible. Never rush the preparation process, allowing appropriate time to inspect, load, and prepare the weapon for the stage and not be in conflict with any other assigned tasks.

Only one person should be responsible for the loading and cleaning of the weapons. This person should be left alone when they are performing these tasks as to not interrupt their concentration.

Make sure all people are aware of the policy regarding a misfire. If a misfire occurs, that weapon should not go back on stage after it comes off for the rest of the show, or until it has been thoroughly inspected.

When handling a live fire weapon to an actor it is customary to tell that actor “Gun **LOADED**” or Gun **NOT loaded**”. The actor needs to acknowledge this before handing over the weapon.