

TECHNICAL INFORMATION PAPER SERIES: PROTECTING PERFORMANCE EQUIPMENT FROM LOSS OR DAMAGE



YOUR LIVE PERFORMANCES ALL DEPEND ON YOUR EQUIPMENT. USE THESE TIPS TO PROTECT IT.

For performers who use equipment during their act, preventing its loss or damage is essential. Without it, the show may not go on.

Though an individual performer or a small performance company may not need the same level of risk management as a large touring company, protecting equipment from loss or damage is just as important. In fact, it may be even more critical because the investment in equipment may represent a more significant portion of an individual performer's income.

Whether you own a single musical instrument, a custom made prop, a truckload of sound and stage equipment, or a warehouse full of theatrical costumes, you can take steps to protect your equipment from loss or damage. Begin by asking yourself a series of questions starting with "How can I protect my equipment from theft, fire or other loss?"

START WITH INVENTORY CONTROL

The first step in effective risk management is to know exactly what equipment you own or lease,

and where it is at all times. You can begin by establishing a procedure to maintain an inventory control program which, at a minimum, records the following information for each piece of equipment:

- Equipment manufacturer and model number
- Serial or VIN number - if none is available, a unique number should be permanently marked on the equipment and recorded
- Date of purchase, receipt and appraisal (information needed in the event of a claim, manufacturers' recall, evaluation of equipment durability and related issues)
- Location of storage and use
- Photograph
- Personnel authorized to use the equipment
- Keep all small, easily stolen equipment such as cameras, computers and hard-to-replicate props or costumes locked in a secure storage area when not in use

THEFT PREVENTION

Theft is one of the most common causes of loss to entertainment equipment. It can occur while your equipment is in storage or while you're on the road.

At Storage Facilities

1. Do you have adequate door and window locks where your equipment is stored?
2. Is there adequate exterior and interior lighting?
3. Do you have a burglar alarm that reports to a central station or a constantly attended monitoring facility?
4. Are appropriate devices installed to control unauthorized entry onto the premises where your equipment is stored?
5. Is there adequate fencing and gates around the building and parking areas?
6. Do you have appropriate visitor sign-in, badges and escort procedures?
7. Are check-in and check-out procedures effective in controlling visitors, independent contractors and others?
8. Do you have an inventory control system in place?
9. Do you have receipts and/or appraisals on equipment such as musical instruments?

In Transit

The majority of performers take their equipment on the road as they perform in different venues. Performers with minimal equipment often use their own cars thereby exposing the equipment to motor vehicle accidents and theft. If you transport equipment in your car, lock it in your trunk where it's not visible to passersby, even if your car doors are locked.

Performers with more extensive equipment often hire companies and drivers to transport it from venue to venue. When contracting with a transportation company, the following steps can help you reduce the potential for loss:

- Screen the transport carrier that will be responsible for these equipment moves. Only hire a carrier that specializes and has experience in this service.
- Ask about the company's drivers. The quality of the drivers is paramount to getting your equipment to its destination on time and in the same condition it was in when loaded. Does the company screen drivers for criminal records? Does the carrier conduct annual

motor vehicle record (MVR) checks? Are drivers medically qualified and do they undergo drug testing as required by the Department of Transportation (DOT)?

- Check that the transport equipment is well maintained. Each truck or trailer should be on a scheduled preventative maintenance program. Water leaks into a transport trailer can do as much damage as a reckless driver who overturns the vehicle when cornering too fast in a turn.
- Ask how transport vehicles are secured when unattended. "High security" locks (unique key, pick resistant, case hardened or laminated steel) should be used.
- If multiple trucks are used, spread the risk among them. Don't transport the main equipment along with its corresponding alternate and backup items. Distribute high-value equipment among different loads.
- For high-value and hard-to-replicate equipment, consider security tracking systems such as LoJack®, global positioning system (GPS) or radio frequency identification (RFID) devices.
- For equipment that's sensitive to damage, provide weatherproof transport containers that protect the equipment during loading, unloading and transport.
- Inventory the equipment at each loading and offloading cycle. Maintain a written manifest that is received and signed by the responsible party.



BEFORE THE CURTAIN RISES

Preparing for the unexpected is vital to ensuring there's no disruption of business. By following these basic steps, you improve the likelihood that no matter what comes your way, the "show will go on."

- Inventory and track your equipment
- Hire experienced and qualified staff
- Keep equipment secured when not in use
- Track and monitor your equipment security program
- Have a contingency plan in place

During Setup, Use and Breakdown

Qualification of the stage hands responsible for setup and breakdown of equipment is critical. Conduct thorough background checks; verify the qualifications and skills of permanent as well as temporary help who may be hired locally at each venue site.

High-value equipment such as speaker systems, projection equipment and lighting may be suspended from overhead truss systems. Be sure that the technicians performing this work are qualified as riggers through formal training or a union apprenticeship program.

No single method or device can eliminate theft while your equipment is being handled before, during or after a show. However, there are ways to reduce theft losses:

- Secure the venue location, don't allow unauthorized personnel backstage or near equipment staging or loading areas.
- Secure individual equipment and keep it locked or guarded; smaller, easily damaged equipment should be maintained in individual storage transport containers.
- Inventory and track equipment.

An effective theft prevention program includes more than one approach and can be adapted to reflect variations among venue sites. Supervisors should be held accountable for implementing the theft prevention program. Inspections should be made to verify its effectiveness.

Securing the premise usually involves one or more of the following:

- Controlled access points (as few as possible)
- Police patrol or private guard service, particularly during off-hours
- Proper illumination
- Closed Circuit Television (CCTV)

FIRE PREVENTION

While less common than theft, fire, smoke or water can cause serious damage to sensitive electronic equipment, musical instruments, textiles and props. It's important to evaluate the condition of the building in which your equipment is stored. If you're not the sole tenant, it's also important to know what other activities are being conducted in the building.

1. Is the building's interior structure, including equipment, in good condition?
2. Is the electrical system adequate and up-to-date?
3. Has the electrical system been upgraded to accommodate new equipment and increased use?
4. Is the heating and air conditioning system properly maintained and safely located?
5. Are all combustibles and flammables stored properly?
6. Is all refuse removed daily?
7. Are "no smoking" rules established and enforced?



8. Are electrical extension cords, tools and appliances safely used?
9. Are fire protection devices (extinguishers, etc.) and sprinklers properly installed, maintained, tested and free of obstruction?
10. Is high-value equipment protected?
11. Are smoke alarms in use, maintained and tested regularly?
12. If you have employees, are they trained to respond quickly and correctly when they smell smoke or see a fire?
13. Are valuable assets segregated (preferably in separate facilities) so that a fire or flood would not wipe out all your major assets?

CONTINGENCY PLANNING

Professional entertainers know that things don't always go as planned. Being able to improvise on stage is great, but having a backup plan in the event of equipment damage or loss is even better. Consider these questions to ensure that your show will go on:

- For critical equipment that may not be easily replaced, is a backup or duplicate piece of equipment necessary?
- For unique or unusual equipment, have diagrams, photographs or scale drawings been maintained? This can help in the re-creation of your special items.

- Is a copy of electronic data or software equipment maintained in a secure location separate from the main data?
- Will weather be a factor at an outdoor venue that could impact equipment? Are canopies or enclosures necessary to protect the equipment? Have you determined who will be responsible for tracking the weather prior to an event?

By implementing sound risk management practices, you'll be ready when you take the stage.

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