

Front of House

Front-of-House personnel have multiple responsibilities that impact audience safety and these responsibilities begin as soon as the public arrives and continuing throughout the performance. They are not finished until the audience members exit the facilities.

Front-of-House can also help ensure the safety of the performers during the performance. Fire and life safety duties are first and foremost. Beyond fire and life safety responsibilities, Front-of-House personnel are also responsible for signs and notices, safety inspections, safe facility conditions, and incident investigations.

Behavior

Make your standard of customer service like that of a luxury hotel with an emphasis on manners, decorum, and ambiance. No matter what your day was like, you are now “performing” with the public and expected to smile, be friendly and enjoy our patrons.

You are also part of the concert hall production family, and, as such, part of a team. You must work together to achieve a successful outcome for your part of the performance.

Required Knowledge

The house manager will schedule a meeting for ushers two weeks prior to the dress rehearsal of the opening performance. The meeting will cover:

1. What to do in case of emergency
2. Facility layout: seat numbering, entrances and exits, fire extinguishers, first aid kits, light switches, restrooms, etc.
3. Concert Hall policies
4. Specific job description
5. Scheduling your hours
6. Attire check (bring your required clothing)
7. Required attendance at final dress rehearsals

The house manager is in charge of the lobby and house before, during, and after the performance. They are responsible for making sure the house is in order. The house manager coordinates with the stage manager and box office manager on deciding when to open and close the house. He/she is the person who schedules, trains, assigns, and supervises the ushers and is a liaison with backstage and box office staff. They review emergency procedures with the stage manager and house staff. The house manager, with assistance from the ushers, makes sure that the lobby, courtyard, and restrooms are clean and functioning before every performance. Any patron problem that can not be handled by an usher is referred to the house manager. The house manager should be present to assist latecomers, answer patron questions during intermission, and encourage patrons to leave following the performance. They also maintain crowd control and initiate established procedures in case of emergencies. When all patrons have left the building, they follow lock-up and security procedures.

Ushers and Ticket Takers

Ticket takers are stationed at each entrance to the concert hall. They take tickets to make sure the ticket holder has paid for that performance. The ticket taker also controls unauthorized entrance to the concert hall, limiting access only to approved staff and patrons with correct tickets. The ticket taker greets the patrons, making them feel welcome and comfortable. Since food, beverages and cameras are not allowed in the concert hall, it is the ticket takers' responsibility to inform patrons of this restriction. During the performance, they monitor the Concert Hall and make sure no one approaches the leading edge of the stage. In case of emergency, aisle ushers direct audience members to the closest exits. Aisle ushers have a working bright flashlight with them at all times.

They also assist the house manager with the upkeep of the lobby area. As patrons leave, ushers can collect playbills for reuse.

Shift starts 2 hours prior to a performance and goes until all patrons have left the building following the performance.

Ushers – Aisles

Aisle ushers hand out playbills and assist patrons in finding their seats. They provide safe footing for patrons on concert hall steps by offering more lighting (via flashlight) or physical support (hold patron's elbow or hand).

During the performance, they monitor the concert hall and make sure no one approaches the leading edge of the stage. In case of emergency, aisle ushers direct audience members to the closest exits. Aisle ushers have a working bright flashlight with them at all times.

They also assist the house manager with upkeep of the lobby and courtyard area. As patrons leave, ushers can collect playbills for reuse.

Shift starts 1½ hours prior to a performance until all patrons have left the facility following the performance.

Advance Preparation

Actions must be taken in advance of the performance to ensure the front-of-house staff is ready. Getting ready includes the establishment of an Emergency Evacuation Plan that will be discussed in detail in a later chapter, training the staff, preparing the facilities, and routine maintenance. Front-of-house staff responsibilities often vary. They generally include the lobby, the concert hall, the box office, restrooms, and courtyard. Some may also include heating, ventilation, and air conditioning; the exterior of the building.

Training the Staff

Front-of-House staff includes Conrad employees and volunteers involved in managing the front of the house, box office sales, and ushers. Each position has responsibilities that are detailed in the job description, and these responsibilities need to be reviewed during training sessions conducted well in advance of the arrival of patrons. The training should include:

- Specific job duties
- Dress codes
- House rules
- Hazard recognition
- How to deal with difficult and/or unruly patrons
- Emergency response duties

Patron Safety

Ensuring patron safety is essential. Patron safety begins prior to their arrival and continues until their departure from the facility.

- Ensure routine documented safety inspections are conducted and appropriate corrective action is taken. This inspection should include the exterior of the building and night lighting conditions.
- Ensure routine inspection and testing of the emergency lighting system, including the testing of the back-up generator when no one is present.
- Check emergency lighting fixtures to ensure they illuminate the pathway without blinding the evacuees.
- Check all illuminated exit signs to ensure they are functioning properly.
- Ensure the program has been printed with the appropriate warnings regarding the planned use of:
 1. Overhead Lights
 2. Pyrotechnic effects (Fog)
- Ensure there is a back-up plan to provide production warnings in case the programs are printed without the required warning information.

- Ensure arrangements are made with facilities maintenance personnel to clear and clean exterior entrances and sidewalks of slip and trip hazards. Conditions that might create these hazards include wet leaves, twigs, gravel, and sand.
- Ensure arrangements are made to provide additional entrance mats in case of sudden adverse weather changes.

Performer Safety and House Rules

The House Manager Must:

1. Ensure the program contains prohibition language regarding:
 - a. The use of flash photography
 - b. Video Recording
 - c. Food in the Concert Hall
 - d. Beverages in the Concert Hall
2. Make arrangements with the Facility Manager for extra security if necessary

Prior to Each Performance

Although routine safety inspections are made of the facility, the house manager must ensure the facility is inspected again prior to the performance and arrival of patrons in order to identify hazards that may have developed since the last routine safety inspection. The house manager should ensure all hazardous conditions are immediately corrected and, if necessary, cancel the performance and evacuate the building. Use a checklist to document the inspection; this will help to ensure all areas of concern are observed and can also be used to document corrective actions taken.

Fire and Life Safety

The focus of fire and life safety is the reduction of the possibility of fire and ensuring the ability to safely evacuate patrons in the event of a fire.

Accessible Exits

- Ensure aisles, corridors, exit pathways, and exit doors are unobstructed.
- Ensure aisles and corridors along the exit pathway are not reduced.
- Ensure no concession or vending tables obstruct access to the exits.
- Ensure no curtains or decorative hangings obstruct or obscure the view of the exits or access to the exits.
- Remove any decorations or posters from the surface of exit doors.
- Ensure there are clear areas on both sides of the exit doors to allow the convergence of evacuees. The clear area on each side of the door must be at least the width of the exit doorway and at least 6-feet deep.
- Ensure exit doors are unlocked and open with ease.
- Check the exterior side of all exit doors to ensure the required exterior area is clear.
- Ensure the immediate removal of any exit constrictions or obstructions.
- Ensure there is a clear exit path from the building to a safe place of refuge on the exterior side of all exit doors.
- Remove any mirrors placed near an exit in any manner.
- Remove any items stored on or under stairways.

Emergency Lighting and Illuminated Exits Signs

- Test the emergency lighting system.
- Inspect the emergency back-up generator test record to ensure the generator can be expected to function properly.
- Check all illuminated exit signs to ensure they function properly and are unobstructed.
- Check the aisle lighting to ensure aisle pathways are properly illuminated.

Fire Extinguishers, Fire Alarm Pull Stations, and Fire Hose Stations:

- Ensure all fire extinguishers are in place and intact (the seal has not been broken).
- Ensure all fire extinguisher “charge indicator gauges” are in the green zone of the gauge.
- Ensure all fire hoses are properly mounted and undamaged.
- Ensure access to the fire extinguishers, fire alarm pull stations, and fire hose stations, is unobstructed and un-obscured. The clearance vertically must be from the floor to the ceiling and must extend horizontally 36 inches from all sides of the fire extinguisher (except the mounting side).

Patron Awareness

Some special effects and special features of the performance may pose a hazard for patrons. It is essential the patrons be notified in advance.

1. Ensure signs are posted in the lobby advising patrons of the planned use of:
 - a. Overhead lights
 - c. Pyrotechnic effects (Fog)
2. Ensure signs are posted in the lobby advising patrons of the prohibition of:
 - a. The use of flash photography
 - b. Video recording
 - c. Food in the Concert Hall
 - d. Beverages in the Concert Hall
3. Ensure informational signs are positioned to ensure patrons see the notice prior to entering the auditorium but not in a manner that obstructs or obscures the exit pathways.

Facility Conditions

The facilities must be checked for cleanliness and the absence of slip, trip, and fall hazards:

1. Ensure entry rugs are level and do not pose trip/fall hazards
2. Ensure the lobby floor is dry and will remain dry as the patrons arrive. Provide extra entry mats if necessary
3. Ensure the exterior of the entry way and sidewalks are free of wet leaves, twigs, gravel, sand, and wet grass clippings
4. Ensure the restrooms are:
 - a. Clean
 - b. Dry – no water on the floors
 - c. Safe – toilet seats are secure
 - d. Stocked with:
 - i. Soap / toilet tissue
 - ii. Hand drying materials or functioning dryer machines
5. Ensure cleaning tools and materials are immediately accessible should it become necessary to clean up spills or respond to patron illnesses.

While the Patrons are Present

The Front-of-House personnel are responsible for making safety announcements, crowd control, safety rule enforcement, emergency response, and incident investigation. The house manager must be on the premises prior to patron arrival and stay until all patrons have left.

In an Emergency

1. The house manager will go to the stage and provide information regarding the nature of the emergency and instruct the audience as to expected actions; i.e., evacuate, shelter in place, etc. The stage manager is generally responsible for evacuating the back of the house.
2. The ushers will direct patrons to exits during evacuations and lead them to assembly points specified in the Emergency Response Plan.
3. After the emergency is over, cooperate with the Facility Manager to complete an incident investigation.
4. Venue-specific Emergency Response Plans may vary; check the Emergency Response Plan for your venue to ensure you understand the procedures.

Crowd Control

1. Take steps to prevent patrons from accessing the stage uninvited.
2. Take steps to control unruly patrons.
3. Enforce house rules regarding the use of:
 - a. Flash photography
 - b. Video recording
 - c. Mobile telephone use
 - d. Food and beverage consumption

Patron Injury/Illness Response and Investigation

1. Immediately provide first aid for minor injuries using universal precautions to reduce the risk of transmitting blood borne pathogens. Universal precautions include:
 - a. Allow the injured person to clean and/or apply pressure to wounds if he or she is able.
 - b. Wear latex gloves.
 - c. Wear a safety CPR mask when administering CPR.
2. Summon emergency medical services by dialing 9-1-1 for non-minor injuries. Examples of non-minor injuries include:
 - a. Head injuries
 - b. Unconsciousness
 - c. Heart attack or symptoms of heart attack
 - d. Stroke
 - e. Deep wounds
 - f. Not breathing
 - g. Broken bones
3. Use the automated external defibrillator (AED) (if one is available) in accordance with the instructions and any training you have received.
4. Notify the person in charge immediately of injuries and illnesses that are not minor.
5. Post personnel along the route from the building entry to the injured person to assist the prompt arrival of emergency medical personnel.
6. Begin the gathering of information for the investigation as soon as the injured or ill person's medical needs are met.
7. Begin incident investigation.
8. Obtain information regarding the injured/ill patron and/or persons with the patron.
 - a. Name
 - b. Address
 - c. Telephone number
 - d. Medical conditions and/or medications being taken; this information must be provided to emergency medical personnel as soon as possible.
9. Obtain information from witnesses.
 - a. Name
 - b. Contact information
 - c. What they saw and/or heard
10. Document investigation on the appropriate investigation form.
11. Report the incident to the Facility Manager.

After the Performance

To ensure the safety of the patrons and premises, the house manager must remain on the premises until all patrons have departed. Additional measures must be taken to ensure the security of the facility and must ensure:

1. All patrons have departed.
2. Clean-up operations as initiated.
3. Food and beverages are properly stored and secured.
4. Exit doors are secured. Incident reports are completed and filed.