



Policy for Flammable Effects Onstage: Flame, Smoke, And Flash

*Approved 03.23.24: Wording updated 08.25.25

1. Licensing and Regulations

- a. The Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms of the Department of the Treasury requires persons who can mix commercial binary chemical kits to create theatrical flash powder to obtain a manufacturer's license, and to post a copy of that license on the premises where the powder is mixed and used.
- b. The users of flammable effects shall comply with all pertinent regulations of the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, and Firearms, or any other Federal, State, or Municipal Agency, that governs the use, storage, manufacture, or transport of flammable or hazardous materials for flammable effects in theatrical productions.

2. Notification

- a. Notify the Madison Fire Department of your intent to use flammable effects in a show, provide them with a list of materials to be used and stored, and obtain the necessary permits.
- b. Notify Overture Center in writing of your intent to do flammable effects a minimum of 30 days (about 3 weeks) in advance of the first use. Outline the effects you hope to use, the materials you plan to store, and how you plan to store them.
- c. Arrange to demonstrate the effect for the Director of Production. They must be satisfied that the effect conforms to this policy before permission is given to use them in a rehearsal or performance.
- d. The Director of Production will notify the Madison Fire Department of flammable effects being used by traveling attractions, telling them of the type of effect and the materials being used, and obtain the necessary permits.

3. Fireproofing

- a. Check and re-treat, if necessary, the fireproofing of all curtains, scenery, props, and costumes that are used with or near flammable effects.

4. Open Flame: Stage and Event Areas

- a. Open flame is allowed on stage only as a last resort.
- b. If candles are used on stage, they shall be kept in a glass chimney, securely mounted or handheld away from flammable material.
 - i. Glass chimneys should be 4" taller than the height of the flame within.
- c. No flammable liquids may be used or stored on stage. Wicks for oil lamps may be soaked in kerosene or oil and used within a glass chimney.
- d. Someone will stand by backstage/nearby with appropriate fire extinguishers while flame is being used on stage. Their only job will be to monitor the open flame and be responsible for putting out the flame if an accident occurs.

5. Flash Powder

- a. Read and follow all manufacturer's instructions and cautions.
- b. Each individual chemical or compound shall be stored in its own, clearly labeled, wooden box (i.e., box for A, box for B, box for A&B).
- c. All individual containers of chemicals shall be clearly labelled as to their contents.
- d. No metal tools or implements shall be used to mix or measure chemicals. No tools shall be stored in the same box with chemicals.

- e. All chemical storage boxes shall be kept in a locked metal cabinet that is clearly labelled as to its contents. Access to this cabinet shall be restricted to the stage manager and those people directly involved in loading and firing the effect.
- f. An inventory and usage log shall be maintained for each chemical. All additions or subtractions from inventory shall be logged and initialed. A Theater Technician, or approved production personnel, will verify starting and ending inventories and initial the log.
- g. Never mix more chemicals than necessary for immediate use. Always thoroughly mix two-part powders in accurate portions.

6. Operators

- a. All persons who prepare or operate flammable effects shall have received a copy of and have read this policy.
- b. The person or persons who load and operate flammable effects shall be eighteen (18) years of age or older.
- c. The person or persons who load and operate flammable effects shall be approved by the Overture Center's Director of Production.

7. Usage

- a. Equipment and devices used for flash powder effects shall be constructed of extremely solid, non-flammable material.
- b. Never fire flash powder in a device that contains the reaction in any way.
- c. Use a system that displays circuit status to both the remote operator and the onstage pyro-technician.
- d. Always fire flash powder remotely with electric squibs or similar devices.
- e. The operator (person responsible for activating the effect) must have a direct view of the device, and direct communication with the onstage technician (Either the pyrotechnician or the technician responsible for the e-stop or fire extinguisher) when firing the effect

8. Loading

- a. Be sure the effect is disconnected before loading.
- b. Never load a hot container.
- c. Thoroughly clean all contacts and connections and remove all excess material from the effects chamber before loading.

9. Firing

- a. Warn operator before plugging in the effect for firing.
- b. Do not break visual contact with the effect until it is fired. If anyone or anything is out of place and/or obstructing the effect, the effect should not be fired.
- c. The onstage technician shall stand by with an appropriate fire extinguisher when an effect is being used.
- d. Disconnect the effect immediately after use.
- e. Immediately remove all unused material from devices that misfire and dispose of safely.