

# QUICK REFERENCE GUIDE TO FIRE SAFETY

for

## THE CELLAR THEATER ~ RUNNALS UNION ~ COLBY COLLEGE

The following guidelines are interpreted mostly from the National Fire Protection Association's (NFPA) document *NFPA 101 Life Safety Code*. This is the code adopted by the city of Waterville. Updated editions may contradict these guidelines and it is possible that local officials may interpret appropriate codes differently. Also be aware that there are many other safety guidelines not listed here (illumination, electrical, etc.). Strive to exceed these guidelines wherever possible. If in doubt, contact the Theater & Dance Department's Technical Director, Colby's Director of Safety, or the appropriate local officials for clarification.

The italicized numbers listed in *[brackets]* at the end of each statement are starting points for further clarification in the *Life Safety Code*.

### SEATING

The official assessment by Colby's Director of Safety states that the maximum number of seats is 55. The maximum occupant load (including audience, cast, crew, the director, ushers, etc.) for The Cellar is 75. If the number of the cast and crew etc. exceeds 20, the seating capacity must be reduced from 55. *[13.1.7.1], [7.3.1.2], [13.7.9.2.2]*

#### **Aisle-ways between the Rows of Seating**

- The minimum distance between the forward most part of one chair and the back-most part of the chair in front of it is 12". This also includes the aisle width between the front of a chair and a physical object, a landing change, or other such obstacle. *[13.2.5.5.2]*
- The minimum distance between the back of one chair and the back of the chair in front or behind it is 32".

#### **Number of Chairs between Access Aisles**

- The maximum number of chairs between two access aisles is 14. *[13.2.5.5.4.1]*
- The maximum number of chairs between an access aisle and a wall or other barrier is seven. *[13.2.5.6.2]*
- Exceptions are possible: For rows of seating with an access aisle at each end, add an additional .3" (to the 12" minimum listed above) for each contiguous seat above 14. For rows of seating with a dead-end, add .6" per contiguous chair beyond seven. In either case, no more than 22" is required per aisle-way between the rows of seating. *[13.2.5.5.4.1], [13.2.5.6.2]*

#### **Bench and Floor Seating**

- 18" must be provided on the bench or along the floor for each person. *[Table 7.3.1.2]*
- The minimum distance between benches is 22" back to back. *[13.4.8.2.1]*

### ACCESS AISLES

- The minimum width for an access aisle is 30". *[13.2.5.6.3 (1a)]*
- Audience members should not have to walk more than 75' before they reach an aisle that leads to *both* approved exit doors. *[13.2.5.1.2], [7.6.1], [3.3.38]*
- Aisles must be kept clear of scenic and other obstructions at all times. *[13.2.5.4.2]*

## EXITS

- Both of the approved exit doors and stairwells must be readily accessible and kept clear of all obstructions at all times. [7.5.1.1], [7.1.10.1], [7.1.10.2.1]
- Hangings, draperies, and curtains are not permitted in the exit doors. [7.5.2.2.1]
- Illuminated exit signs can not be hidden or obscured by scenery, lighting instruments, and other objects, and must always remain visible to all occupants. [7.10.1.8]
- Lights in both stairwells must remain on throughout the entirety of the performance. [7.8.1.2]

## OTHER

- Nothing should hang lower than 6'-8" (including lighting instruments). No platform or other raised surface may be used which reduces audience headroom to a measurement of less than 6'-8". The performance area and tech platform may violate this requirement so long as they are occupied by authorized company members only. [7.1.5.1.1]
- Candles and other open flames are permitted as long as safety precautions have been put in place and approved by an appropriate authority (probably the Theater & Dance Technical Director or Colby's Director of Safety). [13.7.3 (3)]
- All furnishings, decorations, and scenery must be treated for flame suppression or be naturally flame retardant. [13.7.4], [10.3.1]
- Training for and practicing one or more fire drills is mandatory. [13.7.7.1]
- Everyone in the company should be instructed on the proper use of fire extinguishers. [13.7.7.2]
- Prior to the start of each performance, an announcement must be made that tells people where the appropriate emergency exits are. This may be done live, by audio recording, or by projection so long as the necessary information is clearly conveyed to every member of the audience. [13.7.7.3]
- Smoking on stage is permitted as long as it is a *necessary* and rehearsed part of the performance. Given the limited ventilation in The Cellar, smoking by performers is strongly discouraged. [13.7.8.3]

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