



FRONT OF HOUSE VOLUNTEER USHER GUIDELINES

November 2022

INTRODUCTION

Thank you very much for being a Volunteer Usher at Theatre Royal Nelson.

Front of House [FOH] and Back of House [BOH] staff are an integral part of this facility. The productions that come through the Theatre Royal could not go on without your work and support.

It is very important that we all understand the hospitality and health and safety expectations that come with working in our beautiful venue, and that we provide excellent service to our users and patrons.

We strive to ensure that each and every patron has a great experience and you, our ushers, are vitally important in this effort. For most patrons, ushers are the face of the Theatre. You represent both the Theatre and those who have chosen to put shows on in the venue. Be courteous and friendly when dealing with our patrons who have chosen to spend their hard-earned money on coming to the Theatre.

Please read the following information carefully. We ask for and appreciate your adherence to our policies, procedures and protocols. Your hard work keeps everything running smoothly and ensures our patrons have the best possible experience.

Ngā mihi nui
Eliane Polack – Theatre Manager
Amanda Raine – Front of House Manager

CONTACT INFORMATION & HOURS

Usher contact email: frontofhouse@theatreroyalnelson.co.nz

Box Office: 03 548 3840 ext 1

Front of House Manager, Amanda Raine: 022 310 2307

BOX OFFICE HOURS

- Mon-Fri, 12-4pm and one hour prior to shows

USHER RESPONSIBILITIES & OUR EXPECTATIONS

An usher's priority is the safety and positive experience of our patrons.

USHER TRAINING

To ensure everyone who works in the building is familiar with the Theatre's current Health & Safety guidelines and processes, all ushers are required to attend a course annually.

- All new ushers must attend a training course before they begin working on shows.
- All experienced ushers are required to attend a refresher session each year.
- Training courses are held two or three times a year, depending on demand.

USHER RESPONSIBILITIES

- Welcome patrons into the Theatre
- Check that people entering the building have a valid ticket to the show
- Provide information and answer questions

- Assist patrons
 - as required, for example those with different abilities
 - to evacuate in the event of an emergency
- Monitor the behaviour of patrons while they are in the Theatre Royal
- Tidy the auditorium at the end of a show

USHERS MUST BE ABLE TO

- engage with members of the public in a friendly and confident manner
- assist less able patrons if required
- stand for at least 30 minutes
- cope with going up and down stairs, potentially quickly
- respond calmly and quickly in the event of an emergency

We also hope that all our ushers:

- enjoy live performance
- care about ensuring that both patrons and performers have a positive experience of Theatre Royal Nelson.

ATTENDANCE

If you are not able to work a show you're scheduled on, let us know ASAP so that we can find a replacement.

Call and/or email:

- Amanda Raine: 022 310 2307
- frontofhouse@theatreroyalnelson.co.nz
- Theatre Royal: 03 548 3840 ext 1

PUNCTUALITY

Check the roster carefully to see what time you need to be at the Theatre.

- This is usually 70 minutes before show time
- Don't be late

FACE MASKS

- It is no longer compulsory to wear face masks, but ushers are more than welcome to wear one if they're prefer

DRESS CODE

- Tidy black clothes
- Dark, quiet, comfortable shoes that you can stand in for a period of time, that cover and protect your toes.

CHANGE IN CONTACT DETAILS OR CIRCUMSTANCES

- Please keep us up to date with your current contact details.
- If your circumstances change in a way that affects your ability to usher, please let us know.

USHER POINTS SYSTEM

In September 2020 we introduced an Usher Points System.

The way this works is that some shows are 'earn points' shows, some are 'use points' shows.

Earn Points Shows

- Shows that we anticipate it will be difficult to find enough ushers for.
- For example, a local show with a long season will earn you up to 5 points.

Use Points Shows

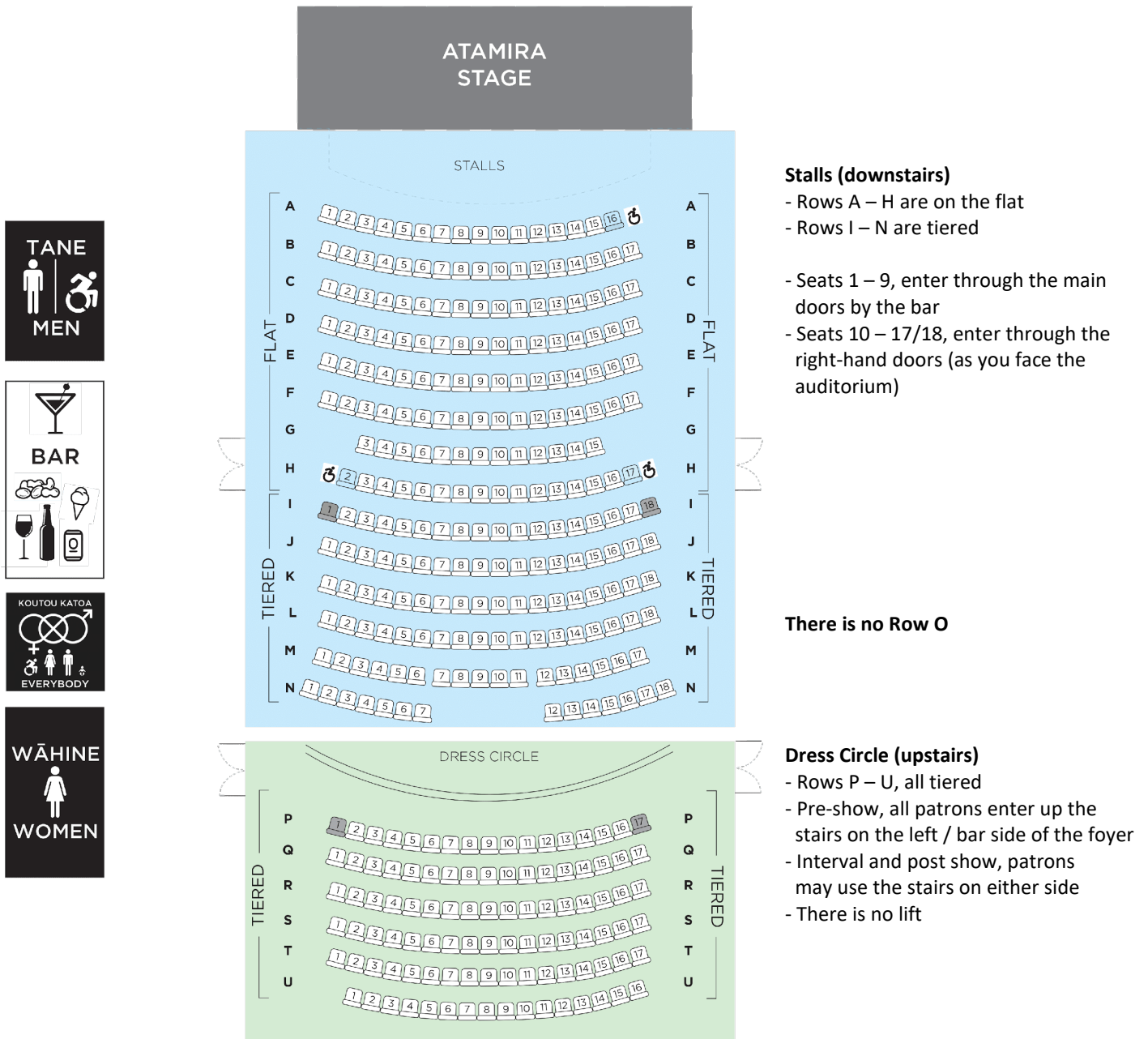
- Shows that we know a lot of people will want to work on.
- For example, an international show doing only one or two performances could cost between 3 and 5 points.
- You must have enough points saved up to work on a 'use points' show.

A show's points allocation is indicated on the schedule of upcoming shows with (+3) or (-2) after the title.

If you want to know how many points you have, contact Amanda.

THEATRE ROYAL AUDITORIUM

Make sure you are familiar with all parts of the auditorium and the seating layout.



Stalls (downstairs)

- Rows A – H are on the flat
- Rows I – N are tiered
- Seats 1 – 9, enter through the main doors by the bar
- Seats 10 – 17/18, enter through the right-hand doors (as you face the auditorium)

There is no Row O

Dress Circle (upstairs)

- Rows P – U, all tiered
- Pre-show, all patrons enter up the stairs on the left / bar side of the foyer
- Interval and post show, patrons may use the stairs on either side
- There is no lift

You must know the position of:

- Entrances / exits
- Bathrooms
- Water fountain
- First aid kits – FOH office & Bar
- AED – Box Office
- Fire call buttons
- Cleaning equipment

Wheelchair positions

- A17 + A16 for a companion
- H1 + H2 for a companion
- H18 + H17 for a companion

Usher seats

Four theatre seats are reserved for ushers:

- I1 & I18 – Stalls
- P1 & P17 – Dress Circle

Additional black chairs are reserved for ushers at the back of the Stalls and Dress Circle.

Front of House Evacuation Assembly Point

Beaurepaires Carpark, beside the building

ROSTERING

The Usher Roster is done a month at a time, a month in advance.

The list of upcoming shows is emailed to all ushers approximately five weeks in advance of the first show.

- This is an easy to complete form, on which you say 'yes' or 'no' to being available to usher.
- Instructions on how to complete it are on the website.
- Use the 'Additional Notes' field to supply any specific information or requests.
- Registering your interest and being available is not a guarantee that you will be rostered on.

The roster will be shared approximately one month in advance of the relevant shows.

- The roster is emailed to all ushers, and is available on the website.
 - Password: encore123
- Cancellation of shifts is possible. You will be notified as soon as possible.

YOU'VE BEEN ROSTERED ON FOR A SHOW

CALL TIME

All Front of House volunteers and staff must arrive on time.

- Check the roster for the time you need to be at the Theatre.
- The usher call time is usually 70 minutes before the show, 10 minutes before the doors open to the public.

ARRIVING / LEAVING

When you arrive for a shift:

- Sign in on the attendance form in the FOH office. This is used to check people off in the event of an evacuation.
- Remember to sign out at the end of your shift.

YOUR BELONGINGS

You may leave your belongings in the FOH Office during your shift.

- No personal devices are to be used while you are on duty. Leave them in the FOH Office.
- Make sure your mobile phone is turned off or on silent.

MUST HAVES

All ushers need to have:

- Torch - please bring your own torch. If you don't have one, you may borrow a Theatre one.
- Usher Lanyard - these are behind the door to the FOH office.

CLOTHING

- Tidy black clothes
- Dark, quiet, comfortable shoes that you can stand in for a period of time, that cover and protect your toes.

FRONT OF HOUSE BRIEFING

It's very important that you attend the FOH briefing. This is where you will:

- learn about the performance:
 - Duration
 - If there's an interval
 - Whether or not photography is allowed
 - If there's a programme, cost and selling instructions
 - Particulars such as strobe lighting, nudity, loudness, house lights up during show...
 - Audience plants
 - Actors coming through the auditorium
- be informed if there are wheelchair users.
- be allocated your position and duties for the shift.

USHER DUTIES

FOYER USHER(S)

PRE-PERFORMANCE

- Greet patrons, welcome them to the Theatre and show
- Ask them to have their tickets ready
 - Tickets on mobile phones may need to be enlarged so they can be read more easily
- Direct people to the Box Office:
 - To pick up or purchase tickets
 - To borrow a booster seat
- Inform patrons:
 - Which door to go to for their seat
 - The location of the toilets, bar and water fountain
- Answer patrons' questions
- Hand out programmes, if applicable

YOUR SEAT: is at the back of the stalls, audience right. This is to ensure you can quickly be in position in the event of having to assist evacuate the building.

INTERVAL

- Be in the foyer to ensure patrons do not take drinks outside.
 - The Theatre's liquor licence does not extend beyond the building.
- Collect empty glasses and return them to the bar.

AUDITORIUM DOOR USHERS

Before the doors open, be by your door to ensure patrons do not enter the auditorium until given clearance.

HOUSE OPEN

When told the 'house is open', open and pin back the doors to admit patrons.

- Listen for the 'bing bong' sound followed by an announcement from the FOH Manager.
- Auditorium doors must not be opened until you're given permission to do so by the FOH Manager.
 - This is usually approximately 20 minutes before the start of the show.
 - Permission must come from the FOH Manager, not a member of the production crew.

Check tickets for:

- Show
- Date
- Time
- If anything is incorrect or there are queries about tickets or seats, speak to the FOH Manager and/or send the patron to the Box Office.

Direct patrons to their seats

- If time allows, show patrons to their seats.
- If relevant, remind people to turn their phones off and that taking photos and/or recording is not permitted.

Potential issues to be aware of:

- Patrons with a receipt instead of a ticket.
 - A receipt is NOT sufficient to gain entry to the auditorium. Send them to the Box Office.
- Patrons sitting in the wrong seats.
- Wheelchair positions that turn into regular seats at the last minute.
 - One of the black chairs may be put in a wheelchair space

SHOW START

- Close the doors when you are instructed by the FOH Manager. Pay attention!
 - The FOH Manager gives the thumbs up to close the doors from the main double doors by the bar.

LATE COMERS

- Some shows have a Lock Out (a time when no-one may enter the auditorium). The FOH Manager will brief you on if / when latecomers may be admitted.

DURING SHOW

Be vigilant at all times.

- Your first priority is the wellbeing of the patrons, not what is happening on stage.
- Pay attention to your door, open and close it as necessary.
- Monitor the audience, their wellbeing and behaviour.

INTERVAL

- Only open the doors once the house lights are up.
 - wait for applause to ease.
- Peg doors back to allow easy flow of patrons.
- Interval duties – keep an eye on the following and do if necessary:
 - top up water glasses
 - collect empty glasses and return them to the bar
 - check general tidiness of the Theatre and foyer
- Be at your door ready to close it when given the all clear by the FOH Manager.

ICE CREAM SALES

- If required, an usher may be asked to assist the Bar Manager to sell ice creams, usually only during the interval.

TORCHES

Use torches mindfully:

- Keep your torch pointed at the floor.
- Be careful not to shine torches in patrons' eyes.
- Do not use your torch to read the programme.

SHOW FINISHED - EVERYONE

- Before opening the doors:
 - wait for applause to ease
 - be aware if there's an encore
 - wait for house lights to come up
- Once this has finished, open and peg back the doors.
- Assist any patrons who may need it.
- Hand out programmes or flyers for upcoming shows – Theatre Royal shows only.
- Thank patrons for coming and wish them a good day/evening.
- Close auditorium doors as soon as politely possible so that the crew can get to work.

Once the audience has left:

- Pick up discarded programmes and rubbish
 - Please put items in the relevant bins for recycling or landfill.
 - Gloves are available in the FOH office.
- Return glasses to the bar.
- Gather up lost property, hand in at the Box Office.
- Report any issues or incidents to the FOH Manager.

SHIFT FINISHED

- Return your Usher Lanyard
- Return torch, if you've borrowed one
- Collect belongings
- Sign out

DOOR HAZARDS

Some doors in the Theatre can pose a hazard for ushers. In particular:

- FOH Office door – mind the door when getting/returning lanyard
- House right door to Stalls – mind the door to backstage when pegging back or releasing the auditorium door
- Dress Circle – mind the door to the Royal Boxes when pegging back or releasing the auditorium door

FEEDBACK

- If you hear feedback about a patron's experience at the Theatre, please pass it on to the FOH Manager.
- If you deal with or receive any complaints, please refer them to or tell the FOH Manager.

HOUSE RULES

PHONES, CAMERAS or RECORDING DEVICES

The use of cameras, phones or other recording devices is generally not allowed during a performance.

- If you see someone taking pictures, recording a performance, sending text messages or talking on their phone, politely ask them to stop.
- Ushers can reinforce this policy when greeting audience members or showing them to their seats.
- If it isn't possible to reach the person, or they are ignoring you, note their location and inform the FOH Manager.
- Occasionally a show will allow photography. If this is the case, you will be informed during the FOH briefing.

LATE COMERS

- Patrons who arrive late will be seated at an appropriate opportunity during the show, usually between scenes, songs or during applause.
- Some performances have a strict lockout policy, with patrons not being able to enter until a specific point, or occasionally not until the interval. You will be told about this during the FOH briefing.
- If there's a lockout, patrons can watch the performance on the screen in the foyer.

AISLES

- Aisles must be kept clear at all times.
- Do your best to ensure bags and other personal items are kept on laps or under seats.
- Items such as walkers, push chairs and strollers must not be parked in aisles. They must be left in the foyer in a place that does not impede egress in the event of an evacuation.

WHEELCHAIR SEATING

- There are three wheelchair positions in the stalls. Refer to the map on page 3 for specific locations.
- Wheelchair seats can only be booked through the Theatre Royal Box Office.
- If the wheelchair positions have not been booked, they may be sold and a chair will be put in the space.
- You will be told during the FOH briefing if any wheelchair users are expected.

BOOSTER SEATS

- These are distributed by Box Office staff.
- Patrons are expected to leave car keys or driver's licence as a deposit, to be collected after the show.
- There are only 6 boosters available. Patrons are welcome to bring their own booster seats or cushions.

THEATRE BAR

- The Theatre's bar is open one hour prior to the performance and during the interval.
- Patrons are able to take drinks and snacks purchased at the Theatre bar into the auditorium. Items purchased outside the Theatre are not permitted.
- The bar will usually close directly after the interval, unless arrangements have been made for it to be open post show, for example for an opening or closing night or a special function.

ANIMALS

- The only animals allowed into the Theatre are service animals.

WATCHING THE SHOW

A perk of ushering is the opportunity to watch shows.

Four theatre seats are reserved for ushers:

- I1 & I18 – Stalls downstairs, P1 & P17 – Dress Circle upstairs

Black chairs are reserved for ushers at the back of the Stalls and Dress Circle.

- If the house is not full, ushers may sit in theatre seats rather than the black chairs.
- These ushers must not sit forward of patrons to ensure they're in a position to observe patron behaviour.

While watching the show, remember to keep an eye on the audience for:

- Patrons texting or talking on their phone, taking photos or recording the show
- Disturbances
- Anyone experiencing a health emergency

EMERGENCY PROCEDURES

An emergency is always unexpected, so it is vital that you know what to do if one happens.

While all of us, employees, contractors and volunteers, are responsible for our own health and safety, do not place yourself in danger. Always call for assistance.

In the event of any of the following emergencies or situations arising, the Theatre Manager will speak publicly for the Theatre. It is important that you do not speak to the media about incidents at the Theatre, unless you have been authorised to do so.

FOH MANAGER'S / CHIEF WARDEN'S DUTIES

The FOH Manager will act as Chief Warden of the FOH area and is responsible for:

- coordinating the activities of the ushers
- ensuring clearance reports are received in respect of all areas of the building following evacuation
- liaising with the Fire Service or emergency services personnel on site for any emergency.

USHERS' DUTIES

Ushers will act as Wardens during an emergency evacuation. Their duties are to:

- check for signs of smoke or fire
- initiate and assist in an evacuation if necessary
- direct, enforce and have full charge of evacuation of all personnel located within their assigned area during the period of fire, emergency or evacuation.

ASSEMBLY POINTS

The assembly points in the event of an evacuation are:

- FOH - Beaurepaires carpark beside the building. Exit out the front and turn left
- BOH - Hunter furniture carpark

IMPORTANT EQUIPMENT

- First Aid Kit: there is one in the Front of House office and another in the Bar.
- AED is located on the wall in the Box Office.

MINOR ACCIDENTS & FALLS

If there's a minor accident, trip or fall:

- An usher should stay with the injured person and send another usher (or patron) to get the FOH Manager.
- If the patron insists that they do not need assistance but appears to be injured, take a note of their appearance and where they're seated, and report it to the FOH Manager. An incident form may need to be filled in and your information and observations could be useful.

ILLNESS / ACCIDENT

These situations may or may not require the show to be stopped.

- Keep calm and assess the situation
- Contact the FOH Manager immediately
- Administer First Aid if you are qualified to do so
- In case of an ACCIDENT, as above, plus:
 - i. Remove, isolate or minimise danger.
 - ii. Clear and isolate the area, move any unnecessary people.
 - iii. The incident scene is not to be interfered with unless absolutely necessary to save life, until cleared to do so by the FOH Manager.
 - i. When the incident is contained and the area is safe, provide first aid to any injured person, if you are qualified to do so.
 - iv. If the patient is willing and able, quietly remove them from the auditorium
 - v. If the person is unwilling or unable to move, remain with them until emergency services arrive.

If emergency services are required, telephone 111. If possible, check that the FOH Manager has not already done so.

MEDICAL EMERGENCY

In case of a heart attack, stroke, seizure or other medical emergency, notify the FOH Manager straight away.

During a performance:

- If possible, move the affected person to the foyer.
- If moving them isn't possible, they are to be made as comfortable as possible or put into the recovery position while waiting for an ambulance.
- The Stage Manager may make an announcement:
 - Asking for people with medical training to identify themselves.
 - Informing the audience that the show has to stop / pause.
- Ushers are to return to their posts and await further instructions.

If possible, the show will continue once the situation has been dealt with.

If the incident is not in your area of responsibility in the auditorium, stay in your position to assist patrons.

THREATENING BEHAVIOUR

- Remove yourself and others from immediate danger.
- Advise the FOH Manager as soon as you can.
- Do not take any risks or try to struggle with the person.
- Observe the person and take note of physical features, clothing, distinguishing marks and/or tattoos.
- If relevant, take a note of escape route taken.
- Write information down as soon as practicable.

FIRE ALARM

- Theatre Royal Nelson has a fire alarm system throughout the building.
- Escape stairways are provided from both front and back of house and are clearly indicated by exit signs.

FIRE ALARM SOUNDS

Upon the continuous sounding of the fire alarm:

- Foyer Usher
 - Exit via the operator door, get the high viz vest from the FOH office, open and push back the double doors closest to the Assembly Point, calmly instruct patrons to come to the Assembly Point
- Door Ushers
 - If seated in I1, I18, P1 & P17 - put on the high viz vests located in the pouches on your seats.
- All door ushers evacuate patrons via the nearest door.
 - Do not pin doors back
- Assist persons with disabilities to evacuate only after the area has been cleared.
- After confirming that your area is evacuated and any persons requiring assistance are accounted for, leave via the nearest door.
- Ensure that lights remain switched on and all doors are closed following the search of each area.
- Report clearance to the FOH Manager at the assembly area.
- Remain available to assist the FOH Manager and carry out any additional duties as instructed by them.

IF YOU DISCOVER A FIRE

- Activate the nearest manual fire alarm call point.
- Call the New Zealand Fire Service – 111.
 - Confirm the nature of emergency, location and building address: **78 Rutherford Street, Nelson**
- Inform the FOH Manager as quickly as possible of the situation.
- Evacuate the building via the nearest fire exit.
- Assemble in the Beaufort car park.

EVACUATION

- If you hear an announcement requesting an evacuation of the Theatre, take position at your doors and, in a calm and orderly fashion, direct patrons to the exits.
- During an evacuation, if the fire alarm stops sounding, continue to evacuate the building.
- Once at the Evacuation Point, report to the FOH Manager:
 - to report that your area is clear of patrons
 - to be ticked off the sign-in sheet
- DO NOT re-enter the building until the Fire Service or FOH Manager advise that it is safe to do so. The silencing of the fire alarm is not an indication that it is safe to re-enter the building.

ESCAPE ROUTES

- Exit doors are not to be locked, barred or blocked.
- Fire-stop and smoke-control doors are to be left closed at all times.
- Fire exits are to be kept clear of obstacles at all times.

EARTHQUAKE

If there's an earthquake:

- Drop, cover, hold as best you can, and encourage patrons to do the same.
- Move away from windows and heavy equipment.
- Remain in the building – it is safer.
- The FOH Manager or Stage Manager will make an announcement to the audience.

POWER OUTAGE

- If there is a power outage, emergency lighting will activate.
- The Production Manager or Stage Manager and Front of House Manager will confer and decide if the show must be aborted. If so, please assist guiding patrons safely out of the building.

BOMB THREAT

- Follow instructions from Management, Security and Police.
- If an evacuation is necessary, evacuation will be by word of mouth, not activation of the fire alarm.
- Switch off mobile phones.
- When evacuating, take personal belongings with you.

ACTIVE SHOOTER

- Activate the nearest manual fire alarm call point.
- House lights will turn on.
- If you are unable to leave the Theatre, find a solid hiding place.
- When evacuating, leave personal belongings behind.

HAZARDS / ACCIDENTS / INCIDENTS

Everyone has responsibility to report hazards, accidents and incidents, irrespective of whether they caused harm or property damage.

- The purpose of reporting them is to solve problems and improve venue operation and equipment.
- Use the handy 'Something Bad Happened' flowchart, in the FOH Office.
- There is a Quick Report Form in the FOH Office.

Emergency Evacuation Duty List

Area to be Checked	To Be Checked By	Exit
Stalls	Ushers	Foyer Entrance
Dress Circle	Ushers	Foyer Entrance
Box Office	Box Office Staff	Foyer Entrance
Bar	Bar Staff	Foyer Entrance
Toilets	House Left Ushers	Foyer Entrance
All backstage areas	Stage/Tech Manager, Crew	Back stage entrance