SMOKING ON STAGE - NOTES AND UPDATES 2026

The Regulations covering Smoking on Stage derive in England from Rules passed in July 2007. A stage is an enclosed space used for public performance for the purposes of the regulations

Rules for Smoking on Stage differ in Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland and other countries.

Please check with the relevant devolved / National authorities and local authorities.

In England It is permitted to smoke on stage through an exemption allowing a performer to smoke where the artistic integrity of the performance makes it appropriate.

The Smoke Free Regulations define enclosed areas and places where smoking is not allowed

Other considerations:

The health and welfare of other performers and crew on stage and the audience should be taken into account. Neither performers , technicians nor audience should be subjected to ill-effects due to second hand smoke

Smoking of other substances than tobacco and using vapes or other devices will normally still be covered under the regulations and exemption

Signage or programme notes should clearly warn audiences if smoking on stage is to take place. You should consider a clause in artists contracts if they will be asked to smoke.

NOTE: in many theatres, and in venues in schools and youth clubs THE PORTRAYAL of smoking on stage is not allowed. This will be a local rule and not under the regulations but it can be enforced under local authority bye laws, house rules etc.

Please check carefully with your venue management that smoking or the portrayal of smoking will be permitted and what precautions need to be taken

Careful checking is better than wishful thinking!!

Smoking normally constitutes a fire hazard, it must be limited to only in performances in front of audiences (not permitted in rehearsals, tech closed session dress rehearsals etc). Always take advice on fire precautions .

Appropriate precautions include double checking that all scenery drapes and costumes are ‘flambar’ coated or protected from sparks. Sand buckets and sand in ashtrays on stage is preferable to water. Appropriate fire extinguishers must be available in the wings or close to the stage and crew familiar with using them, plus ‘eyes on’ by someone on cans should be the rule whenever smoking takes place on stage.

It is advisable to limit smoking on stage as much as possible, only allowing it when it is considered absolutely necessary

NOTES FOR TOURING

Include a note about smoking on stage in your advance paperwork/ riders etc. Best to know in advance!

Have a ‘non smoking’ plot for the show for venues which will not allow even the portrayal of smoking.

Be prepared for at least some venues to enforce a no smoking policy on stage

Remember that rules are likely to differ in Wales Scotland Northern Ireland and of course in Eire; most countries regulate smoking in public places now but policies regarding smoking on stage will differ.

https://theatrecrafts.com/pages/home/topics/stage-management/smoking-on-stage/

Rules may also differ in different local authority areas