



CANADIAN ARTISTS REPRESENTATION /  
LE FRONT DES ARTISTES CANADIENS

## ADVISORY NOTE

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# Studio Health and Safety Checklist

Revised by Susanne Hamilton for CARFAC SASK

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## Introduction

Many artists are simply not aware of the problems and hazards connected with the practice of art. There are few available courses, which cover the specific problems of the visual artist so it is often only through individual research that artists become aware of potential hazards. Many hazardous materials are not adequately labelled by the time they reach the artist's hands and often can lead to unsuspected hazards. As well, many artists are not acquainted with the basic pre-cautions they can take to greatly reduce risks. Simple changes in work habits can often greatly minimize risks. This worksheet and information package is a guide for visual artists when assessing their studio environment for safety, and handy source of information about safe work habits. It is not a complete assessment for all endeavours.

It is my hope that every visual artists reading this booklet will take the time and effort to complete the questionnaire and then change any negative practices discovered. Only you can make the difference. By taking the time to avoid the risks involved in practising your art I am sure that you, as an artist, will experience a brighter future and a safer creative life. Good luck.

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# Checklist

The Studio Safety Checklist is divided into four sections: the checklist, information notes, a list of safety rules and an extensive list of additional sources. To get full benefit from this pamphlet read the three sections of the checklist and answer as many questions as possible. Be honest. Refer to the notes for information and explanations relating to the questions. Having identified areas in need of improvement and practice the safety rules.

## Personal

- If your studio is in your home, do you share living quarters with others?
- Are there children and/or animals?
- If you are female, are you pregnant?
- Is anyone you live with pregnant?
- Do you smoke?
- Do you share your environment with someone who smokes?
- Do you eat at least one good meal a day?
- Do you eat a well balanced diet?
- Do you work for long hours without rest periods?
- Do you suffer from: (answer as many as applicable)
  - headaches
  - persistent flu-like symptoms
  - loss of appetite
  - stomach problems
  - persistent lethargy
  - excessive unexplained tiredness
  - none of these
- Do others around your studio suffer from similar symptoms?
- Do these symptoms lessen or disappear after being away from the studio a week or more?
- Do you have a history of long term health problems?
- Do you keep a record of your work history?

- Do you know which of the materials you use are potentially dangerous?
- Does your doctor know the materials/processes that you are using?
- Do you know where to go for information on health hazards?
- Do you use these sources?

## Work Habits

Do you...

- Wear specially designed/adapted clothes for the studio?
- Wear overalls of work clothes?
- Use protective clothing when appropriate?
- Wear safety shoes when appropriate?

Do you...

- Wear headgear to protect your hair?
- Wear eye protection when appropriate?
- Know the proper mask/respirator for the materials/processes which you are using?
- Wear gloves or barrier creams when appropriate?
- Wear hearing protection when appropriate?
- Avoid loose clothing, jewelry, or long hair around working machinery or open flames?
- Change out of your work clothes when you leave the studio?
- Clean/wash your work clothes regularly?
- Clean/wash those clothes separately from other laundry?

Do you...

- Allow others to smoke in the studio?
- Prepare food in the studio?
- Eat in the studio?
- Drink any beverages in the studio?
- Drink alcohol in the studio?
- Drink alcohol immediately/shortly after exposure to gases vapours, fumes, etc. in the studio?
- Wash your hands before eating, smoking, etc. after you have been working in the studio?

Do you...

- Use cadmium or lead solders?
- Work with asbestos?
- Use dyes, inks, paints, glazes, etc. in powder forms?
- Point your brushes with your mouth?
- Often get paints on your skin?
- Wash with solvents if you have painted on your skin?

- Use solvents regularly?
- Use odourless solvents?
- Use solvents for prolonged periods of time?
- Leave your solvents uncovered?
- Soak your brushes in open cans of solvent?
- Use solvents in the palm of your hand to clean your brushes?
- Often get solvents on your skin?
- Use solvents near possible ignition sources?
- Use other volatile materials regularly?
- Use volatile materials in small, air-tight spaces?
- Use volatile materials near possible ignition sources?

Do you...

- Plan work activities carefully to eliminate unnecessary exposure?
- Separate potentially hazardous activities from others?
- Avoid the use carpets of other fabric floor coverings?
- Plan your work and storage areas to reduce air-borne dusts?
- Acquire and use appropriate storage cabinets and containers?
- Store powdered materials in air-tight jars/bins?
- Store all materials with proper, adequate labelling?
- Store liquids in tightly capped bottles/cans?
- Avoid storing pallets, painting materials or chemicals in your home refrigerator?
- Store dangerous materials away from your work and living areas?
- Store flammable in special containers?

Do you...

- Store large containers on the ground or on low shelves so that they will not fall and spill?
- Clean up all spills and leakages, liquid or powder immediately?
- Clean up and put away all materials and tools immediately after use?

## **Safety Precautions**

Do you...

- Review your safety precautions and procedures regularly

Do you...

- Check your equipment and smoke detectors regularly to ensure that all systems are functioning properly?
- Know your equipment and follow safety instructions exactly?
- Have adequate instructions on the safe use of your equipment and materials?
- Keep an adequately stocked first aid kit in the studio?
- Have planned emergency procedures in case of an accident or fire?
  
- Have emergency phone numbers posted by the phone?

## NOTES

Studios in a home, or mixed work environment greatly increase potential hazards or dangers. The elderly, children, pregnant women, smokers and persons with general health problems are especially vulnerable to arts hazards. Children and animals are particularly susceptible to small amounts of toxic materials which can have an exaggerated effect on them. Pets can carry dusts and powders from the studio to contaminate other spaces.

A general lack of good health, an inadequate diet or overwork can decrease a person's resistance to health hazards. An annual checkup is an important preventive measure as it gives the doctor the opportunity to compare your present state of health with your history. Your doctor needs to know which toxic materials you use, and the frequency and duration.

The three main ways that artists are exposed to contaminants are through absorption, inhalation and indigestion. Chemicals can cause direct damage to the skin or penetrate the skin and enter the blood stream. Artists may inhale sprays, solvent fumes, dust, etc. which can cause chemical an/or physical damage to the lungs, and from the lungs enter the blood stream. Artists may inadvertently swallow contaminants by eating, smoking or drinking in the studio.

Artists and others who suffer from asthma must be particularly careful about materials which come in the form of sprays, mists or dusts. Others with lung problems must be extra caution about their use of solvents, lacquers, oil-based paints and inks which can aggravate or even cause respiratory problems.

Two of the basic concepts to be aware of when considering health hazards are "total body burden" and "multiple exposure". The body may tolerate one source of exposure of toxic substances but in our everyday environment it seldom stops there. For instance, smokers run higher than normal risks because smoke affects the lungs, as do air pollutants. If a smoker is also exposed to toxic dusts, fumes, solvents, glues, and the like, the lungs are then assaulted by "multiple exposures" in the same way the body may be exposed to a particular material in a variety of ways. The artist may be exposed to lead vapour in the studio when soldering, then from cigarette smoke and automobile exhaust. The "total burden" may be too high and accumulate until it leads to lead poisoning. Extensive or frequent use of dangerous materials increase the artist's chances of overexposure.

## SAFETY RULES

- 1. Studio Safety**  
DO NOT WORK IN YOUR LIVING QUARTERS OR KITCHEN  
Do not make dual use of kitchen utensils.  
Have bare floors to facilitate cleanup.  
Keep materials and equipment out of children's reach.

Keep pets out.  
Control the access to your materials and equipment.  
Have a sink and running water readily available in case of chemical accidents.

**2. Develop Good Work Habits**

Have adequate ventilation for all activities and especially when working with solvents and other volatile materials.  
Plan activities to eliminate unnecessary exposure or dangerous procedures and processes.  
Separate potentially hazardous activities from the general work area to lessen the chances of contamination.  
Clean up before leaving the studio.

**3. Know Materials and Processes**

Know the components of all your materials, particularly those used frequently or for long periods.  
Ask suppliers or manufacturers for “materials safety data sheets”.  
Replace hazardous materials with safer equivalents.  
Avoid asbestos.  
Use all hazardous materials sparingly and in the least dangerous form.  
Read all labels; recommended procedures carefully.  
Use the least hazardous techniques and processes.  
Develop a small safety file or library for easy quick consultation.

**4. Use Safe Storage Procedures**

Use proper containers of metal or plastic. Do NOT use milk jugs and soft drink bottles.  
Cover and label everything accurately.  
Store all liquids in sealed containers.  
Store flammable materials separately in approved safety containers.  
Have the proper fire extinguisher and check regularly.

**5. Develop Good Housekeeping Habits**

Clean up all spills immediately.  
Vacuum or wet mop dusts; sweeping just scatters.  
Dispose of wastes using proper procedures.  
Dispose of chemicals, solvents and other hazardous materials safely. (Check with your provincial environment department).  
Keep the studio as clean and neat as possible.

**6. Dress Appropriately**

Wear work clothes and leave them in the studio so as not to carry out contaminants.  
Wash work clothes frequently and separately.  
Have and use the proper protective clothing and equipment when needed; gloves and barrier creams for irritating chemicals; goggles for protection from splashes, flying particles, etc.; hearing protection for continuous loud noise; masks and respirators for fumes and dusts, etc.

Keep your safety equipment clean.  
Replace absorbing materials frequently according to manufacturer's recommendations.

**7. Maintain Good Personal Hygiene**

Never eat, drink or smoke in the studio.  
Do not allow others to eat, drink, or smoke in your studio.  
Do not wash your skin with solvents.  
Treat injuries or irritations immediately so they do not become contaminated.  
Wash extra carefully after working with hazardous materials.

**8. Reduce Physical Hazards**

Tie back or cover long hair.  
Do not wear loose clothing, rings, necklaces, etc. which might get caught in machinery.  
Have your wiring in good repair to avoid shorts and the danger of fire.  
Adequately ground all electrical equipment.  
Learn the proper ways to move or lift heavy materials and equipment by hand or use proper moving equipment such as trucks, trolleys and pulleys.

## **SOURCES OF ADDITIONAL INFORMATION**

**Department of Labour  
Occupational Health and Safety Division**  
1870 Albert Street, 6<sup>th</sup> Floor  
Regina, Saskatchewan  
S4P 3V7

**Canadian Centre for Occupational Health and Safety**  
250 Main Street East  
Hamilton, Ontario  
L8N 1H6

Toll-free 1-800-668-4284  
Web-site: [www.ccohs.ca](http://www.ccohs.ca)

**Federal  
Department of Human Resources Development  
Labour, Safety and Security Services**  
General Inquiries (819) 997-0610

**Alberta  
Department of Labour**  
General Inquires (403) 427-2723

**British Columbia  
Workers Compensation Board**

General Inquiries (604) 273-2266  
FAX (604) 279-3151

**Manitoba  
Manitoba Labour Workplace Safety, Health and Support Services**

General Inquires (204) 945-3446  
Toll-free in Manitoba 1-800-282-8069

**New Brunswick  
Occupational Health and Safety Commission**

General Inquires (506) 453-2467  
Toll-free in NB 1-800-442-9776

**Newfoundland  
Department of Employment and Labour Relations, Occupational Health and Safety**

General Inquires (709) 729-2721  
FAX (709) 729-6639  
Toll-free in NFLD 1-800-563-5471

**Nova Scotia  
Department of Labour, Occupational Health and Safety Division**

General Inquires (902) 424-8603  
FAX (902) 424-3239  
Toll-free in NS 1-800 424-8603

**Ontario  
Minister of labour Occupational Health and Safety Branch**

General Inquiries (416) 326-7770  
FAX (416) 326-7761

**Prince Edward Island  
Department of Labour Occupational Health and Safety Division**

General Inquiries (902) 368-5470  
FAX (902) 368-5526

**Quebec  
CSST**

General Inquiries (514) 873-7183  
Telecopieur (514) 873-7007

**Saskatchewan  
Department of Labour Occupational Health and Safety Division**

General Inquires (306) 787-4496  
Toll-free in Saskatchewan 1-800-567-7233

**Northwest Territories  
Department of Safety and Public Services**

General Inquiries (403) 873-7468  
Telecopieur (403) 873-0117

**Yukon**

**Workers' Compensation, Health and Safety Board**

General Inquiries (403) 667-5450  
Fax (403) 667-2079

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