



From: "What I Got, What I Need. For Winnipeg Fringe Show Producers" Facebook Group (June 13, 2015)

Dave Brown : "It's that time of the year again for my top ten rules. Most of your questions can be answered by reading the following. Have a great Fringe, stay safe and remember they are just props; when handled properly, they are no more dangerous than any other prop in your show!"

THE TOP TEN RULES FOR USING A REPLICA FIREARM IN YOUR FRINGE SHOW

#1 – Check with the Fringe. They need to be notified, and all use of replica firearms must be approved in advance.

#2 - When looking for a replica gun to use on stage, consider building a mockup or finding a generic-looking gun that differs significantly from real ones in size, shape or colour. Technically, it may be possible to make it look TOO real. Buying realistic-looking replicas such as airsoft guns and painting them to look real can potentially result in charges for possession of prohibited devices, especially if they are lost or misused. To avoid this, I suggest that any production considering airsofts consult with an expert.

#3 – Before you introduce replica firearms into your production, hold a safety briefing for ALL cast and crew. Make sure everyone is aware of what you are using and show them exactly what makes it safe. Explain the chain of responsibility and detail exactly who can handle it and when. Before it is turned over to a designated person, let everyone see it, handle it, touch it and check for themselves that it is safe. Answer any questions people may have. Don't just suddenly introduce a gun into your show without telling anyone beforehand.

#4 – If you are using anything that shoots pellets, paintballs, or BBs, they must be altered or modified so that it can no longer load, chamber or fire any projectiles. Make sure there are no pellets or obstructions still stuck in the barrel. A forgotten pellet can result in serious injury.

#5 – Don't use real firearms under any circumstances.

#6 – Designate one crewmember to be responsible for transporting, storing, placing, supervising and receiving the replica gun. They should keep a paper trail of where the gun was obtained from and who is responsible for it. The replica firearm should never be out of that person's eyesight or control during use and once finished, the replica should never go outside the venue unless properly and discreetly cased.

#7 – Do not allow any cast or crew to bring personally-owned or borrowed guns to rehearsals or performances, just to "help out." Everything that is to be used must be safe and approved by all.

#8 – Do not point guns at the audience. Honestly, if your cast members cannot avoid pointing guns at the audience or are playing with them, you probably shouldn't be giving them a gun anyway.

#9 – Gunshot effects can be done in a variety of ways. Always have a backup. Unless your production has the budget for it, do not even consider the use of blanks. Firing blanks on or off stage requires very careful preparation and supervision from an experienced expert. This is not something to enter into casually. If you can't afford to hire the appropriate expertise for every single show plus rent the proper blank-firing guns and obtain the required permits from the police, find another way. Blanks can be dangerous if you don't know what you are doing.

#10 - All that being said, remember that it's just a prop. When handled responsibly and safely, it becomes just a piece of metal or plastic. Follow some simple safety guidelines, don't allow any horseplay with them, be responsible with them ... and you can have a fun show.

If you handle them with respect, they are just as safe as any other prop in your show.

Stay safe my friends!