



Motion picture safety 101 moves online

By Marnie Douglas

Actsafe's new interactive online safety course takes users through work in the motion picture industry and the hazards one might encounter along the way.

Movie and television sets can be exciting and glamorous places to work — from working alongside the next Hollywood superhero or stylish actor to making fantastical worlds come to life. However, the motion picture and television industry also has its safety challenges. Sets are like small, makeshift cities with large numbers of crews and actors, and many potential hazards.

With a mixture of brand-new and long-time staff, it's important that everyone is on the same page when it comes to health and safety. That's why Actsafe, the safety association serving B.C.'s motion picture and performing arts sectors, recently launched a unique interactive safety course.

Much-needed course

"The industry identified the need for this course," explains Anand Kanna, Actsafe's manager, motion picture programs and services. "There are 40,000

workers in this industry in B.C. We wanted to come up with a better way to reach them, but in a creative and more interactive way."

The general safety course has always been offered as a four-hour workshop, but with the industry booming over the last few years and so many more workers joining the industry, it was becoming increasingly difficult to deliver.

Plus, many of the workers may only be on set for a week or even a day. "This is basic, high-level safety information that everyone working in the industry needs to know, regardless of how long they are working on a set," says Kanna. "It was becoming challenging to deliver the information in a workshop setting."

Called Motion Picture Safety 101: General Awareness, the online, interactive video game-style course can be completed anywhere with an internet connection at any time. Users play the role of a worker on the set of a movie as they learn about rights and responsibilities, hazard identification and controls, and work practices unique to worksites in motion picture and television production.

Choose your own adventure

The user first learns about safety specific to the production office, followed by a sound stage and a construction shop. From there, Kanna explains that users can choose from any number of modules specific to certain work environments — from the hair and makeup studio to city streets and remote locations. They also learn about health and safety specific to the industry, such as working around various vehicles, stunts, and special effects.

“There are 18 modules and each is modelled after some aspect of the motion picture industry,” he adds.

It takes about five hours to complete and can be completed in parts, all while collecting stars and knowledge along the way. The course is a requirement to become an associate member with the Directors Guild of Canada as well as a permittee with the International Alliance of Theatrical Stage Employees Local 669, the International Alliance of Theatrical Stage Employees Local 891, and the Teamsters Local 155.

Not your everyday hazards

Kim Stubbs, WorkSafeBC industry specialist, says the course is unique in that the film industry is complicated, with so many different roles.

As an example, during pre-production, construction crews need to be aware of potential hazards when using ladders, scaffolds, or power tools. Paint crews

need to know how to work safely with hazardous materials such as paints and solvents. During production, the cast and crew may encounter potential hazards when filming at unusual locations or in remote areas. There’s also the risk of moving objects, slips and falls, and exposure to noise and chemicals.

“There’s a lot of potential for every type of hazard. The interactive online safety course is good at providing awareness on the more common industry-specific hazardous conditions and acts,” says Stubbs. “It’s unique. I’ve never seen something like this in any other industry before.”

The course was launched in January this year and to date, nearly 1,000 people have completed it. Kanna says the feedback has been positive.

“It’s been overwhelmingly supportive. The motion picture industry has always been an early adopter of technology so I’m hopeful that other industries will look to us and this course when considering ways to deliver important safety information,” he says.

Adds Stubbs, “Any tool that can help the employer deliver critical safety information is useful and a benefit. The creativity around this one is great.”

Visit actsafe.ca/courses for more information on the Motion Picture Safety 101: General Awareness course and other safety courses offered to the motion picture and television industry. ☺



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