

# IATSE Local 470 Wardrobe “NEEDS TO KNOW”

Wardrobe is not a “blowoff” or easy job. You have to be constantly alert and very organized. Actors and costumes can change from show to show, or even in the middle of a show! You are dealing with many different personality types all at once, and some of these can be very difficult, so **YOU** must be the calm in the storm.

Please understand that standards of etiquette are different in wardrobe than in other areas of the stage. Whereas stagehands can often get away with vulgar language and clothing, dressers usually cannot. Remember that you are working very closely with actors in very personal circumstances, so be respectful and courteous. You will be reprimanded and possibly sent home from a job if your language, clothing or attitude is toxic.

Keep in mind that “freedom of speech” does not give you any rights to harass or discriminate against a co-worker, against a guest worker such as road crew and actors, or against a customer or client of the theater. Your employer has the legal right to enforce reasonable rules against behaviors that may create a hostile work environment. Freedom of speech only means that the government won’t arrest you for saying stupid stuff. Your employer can and will regulate your speech and behavior in the workplace.

## **1. YOUR WARDROBE DEPARTMENT HEAD IS YOUR UNION STEWARD**

If you have questions about your job, or if you have problems between you and a co-worker, or problems between you and the road crew, you should speak as soon as possible to the wardrobe union steward. This person is here to help resolve problems, up to and including grievances and police reports. The steward will help you document dates, times and witnesses to what happened.

**Do not complain to the road crew or to the actors**, especially gripes of a personal nature or internal union problems. Verbal or physical fighting will not be tolerated.

If you have a problem with the union steward, do not fight with them at the time. Afterward, you can file a complaint with the Executive Board of Local 470. The general rule is: “Obey now, grieve later.”

## **2. CALL TIME**

Call time is non-negotiable. At call time, you must be ready to **start working**. Merely being somewhere inside the building is not good enough if you are still hanging up your coat, drinking your coffee, chatting with friends, or going to the lavatory. Plan to arrive at least 10 minutes before your call time, so you can check in with your wardrobe union steward, take care of your personal business and be ready to work on time.

Being on time is essential, because if you are absent, you will miss important announcements, and your co-workers will have to try to do your work for you. In this business, we usually work under very tight timelines. The curtain still has to go up at the appointed hour. If you are late, it will have a ripple effect on every other employee as they try to get your work done in addition to their own. You don’t want to be the reason that the show didn’t start on time.

Also, it might be the case that you are the only one trained to do your particular portion of the job. If you are late, there might not be someone who can easily cover for you. This will

delay the start of the show even more while we wait for you to arrive or while someone else tries to learn your duties on a crash course.

If you are late, it will be documented and the employer may discipline you for this. If you receive several warnings, you may lose work privileges for a period of time.

If you cannot avoid being late, you **must** contact the wardrobe union steward or business agent (in that order) with as much notice as possible. Phone call or text is acceptable.

### 3. BASIC SUPPLIES



Basic supplies include a handful of large safety pins, needle & thread, small scissors, hands-free flashlight (bite lite or head lamp), pen and paper. Don't assume that the show will provide these things. You need to carry these tools with you during every show and every work call. Get a dresser apron (like a waitress apron) or a vest or smock with large, loose pockets (like a photographer vest, medical scrubs shirt or beautician smock) or pants with large, loose pockets (like cargo pants). Pants with small, tight pockets or pants without pockets are a bad choice, unless worn along with an apron or smock.

As you gain more experience as a dresser, you may find yourself adding more things to your dresser apron: shoe horn, tweezers, band aids, hand sanitizer, Kleenex, collar stays, topstick, nail clipper, cough drops, etc. These things are great to have but not mandatory.

If you are dressing an ice show, you must also carry a needlenose pliers or multi-tool with pliers at all times. Skate covers have lots of hooks, and the hooks frequently get stepped on and must be pried open. Don't expect another employee or the supervisor to have the required pliers to loan to you.

### 4. IRONING A SHIRT (and other stuff)



Before you start ironing, ask the wardrobe supervisor if they want creases or no creases in the sleeves. Ask the supervisor if starch is to be used. Ask if the supervisor wants distilled water in the iron or if tap water is okay. If you don't know what kind of fabric it is, ASK! You will want to use the hottest temperature allowed for the type of fabric, but not too hot. Do not press the iron over Velcro (it will melt). You need to know which fabrics need steam and which ones should have a dry iron. Learn how to use a sleeve board, a tailor's ham and a pin board for special ironing situations. Check your iron regularly and use iron cleaner for scorch marks on the sole plate.

If the garment is long enough to touch the floor when it is laid over the ironing board, use a drop cloth on the floor so that the fabric doesn't touch the floor.

If you are using spray starch, lay a drop cloth on the floor under your ironing board to catch the overspray. The floor will become *very* slick from the starch, and may cause someone to slip or fall.

Don't let yourself get caught up in the old dreaded question about which order to iron the parts of a shirt. This isn't math class, and you won't be asked to show your work. What is most important about ironing a shirt is how wrinkle-free it looks after you have ironed it, and how long you took to do it. The quality of the job is rather subjective – over time you will learn what looks "good enough" and what is not good enough. You will also be expected to improve your speed over time. A simple dress shirt should take only about 5-6 minutes, and no more than 10-12 minutes for a ruffled shirt or if you are using extra starch.

Find an ironing routine that works best for you. The basic idea is to press the smallest segments of the shirt first and work up to the largest areas, moving the fabric around the

ironing board as few times as possible. The more you move the fabric around the board, the more wrinkles you may put back into the fabric.

A good routine that works for many people when ironing a shirt is offered below, but it is only a suggestion. If you have a different method that works better for you, follow it.




- collar
- cuff and sleeve on one side, then cuff and sleeve on the other side
- yoke (shoulders and neck area)
- the body of the shirt: one front panel, the back panel, the other front panel

Don't iron folds into the collar and cuffs!

## **5. GARMENT STEAMER**

Many garments can be steamed rather than ironed. It is usually faster and easier than ironing. This works best for lighter fabrics such as silk, polyester, etc. Natural fibers like cotton and linen need more direct heat than a steamer provides, so they are usually ironed. However, dress shirts can be quickly freshened up with a steamer and the wardrobe supervisor may say that this is good enough. Don't decide this for yourself. You should always expect to iron a shirt unless the wardrobe supervisor specifically says that you can steam it.

The steamer brand name that has become the industry standard is *Jiffy*®. It heats quickly and tends to spit water less than most other brands.

Keep in mind some precautions  when using a steamer:

- Don't touch the steamer nozzle or metal hose fittings to your skin. You can get a serious burn off these parts of the machine.
- Don't get the cloud of steam too close to your skin or inhale the steam. The steam itself can also burn you.
- If the steamer starts spitting water, move it away from the garment at once. You don't want to leave water marks on the fabric.
- If the steamer starts making a gurgling or choking noise, it is usually because the hose has become kinked and the flow of steam is partially blocked. Simply raise the nozzle straight up over your head until the hose is straight and wait a few seconds until the gurgling stops.
- Don't plug in more than one steamer in one electrical circuit. Heat-generating appliances (like steamers and irons) should be one per circuit. Other appliances (lamps, sewing machines, etc.) can be several per circuit. If you don't know the amperage of an appliance, ASK!
- Make sure not to run the steamer dry. This may damage the machine or start a fire. Refill the water jug or tank as needed.
- Use your steamer as far away from fire detection systems as possible. It has been known to happen that fire alarms were set off when a steamer was running right underneath a detector in the ceiling of a dressing room.
- If you will be stepping away from the steamer, even for a few minutes, turn it off. They heat up so quickly that there really is no need to leave it running unattended.
  - ✓ The machine may run out of water while you are not attending to it.
  - ✓ The longer a blast of steam is directed at the same spot on the ceiling, the more likely a fire alarm will be triggered.
- When you are finished using the steamer for the day, unplug it and **empty out the excess water** before storing the steamer away. Leaving the water in the machine for a

long period of time allows lime scale to build up inside the machine and reduces its lifespan. It is not necessary to stuff paper towels into a steamer tank unless the wardrobe supervisor tells you to do this for travel. Sometimes the paper towels keep the moisture inside the machine, and it can become mildewed.



## **6. HAND SEWING**

Daywork personnel and dressers are expected to know basic hand sewing. You are expected to be able to sew on a loose button or snap, replace a broken swingtack, and stitch up a loose hem. Any larger repairs or alterations will be sent to the stitcher but everyone should be ready and able to do the small stuff themselves.

## **7. SHOES (polishing, painting, gluing rubber)**



When working a daywork call in wardrobe, you may be assigned to work with shoes. You need to know the basic techniques for cleaning and polishing leather shoes, how to clean patent leather, how to paint leather, and more. Learn what dance rubber is, and how to apply it.

The industry standard for applying dance rubber (and many other things) is **BARGE® Cement**. When using Barge, multiple safety precautions are needed, as this product can be very harmful if used contrary to instructions. See the MSDS information at the end of this document.

## **8. ATTIRE AND HYGIENE FOR DRESSERS**



As a dresser, you should always dress in solid black for performances. You might need to be in the wings or even on the stage itself for a quick change, and the more covered up you are, the less the audience can see you in the dark.

Choose clothing that covers arms and legs completely, such as long sleeve shirts, long pants, or long skirt with dark hose. Tank tops, shorts and bare legs under a short skirt are generally not acceptable, as it leaves too much skin exposed to be seen by the audience.

Shoes must also be black. Shoes must be sturdy, with closed toe and heels, and must have soft soles so as not to make noise while walking/running in the wings for quick changes.

It is a very good idea to have a thin cap or bandana on hand, in case you need to place an actor's hat on top of your own head. Sweat happens... not to mention head lice.

Stitchers and laundry personnel can be exempt from the black clothing rule *only* if they don't go on deck at any time during the show.

Clothes should not be too revealing or contain vulgar pictures or words. You may be reprimanded or sent home if your attire is unacceptable.



Please observe the basics of personal hygiene. You will be physically very close to your actors, so be courteous to their senses. Bathe often and wear deodorant. Brush your teeth, and bring breath mints or gum. Make sure your clothes are clean and mended. If complaints are received about your body odor, bad breath or smelly clothing, you may receive a written warning or other discipline by the employer.

Go very lightly on your own makeup.



You will be in close quarters with the costumes and sometimes with nearly naked bodies, so you don't want your makeup rubbing off on a costume or another person.

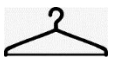


## 9. DRESSER TRACK

Most shows have written instructions for each dresser to follow during the show, outlining all your pre-sets and quick changes. This is called your **DRESSER TRACK**.

- Perform all instructions in your track notes ***in the order given***. Do not skip a step, and do not do them out of order. Each dresser track is unique, so do not compare notes with other dressers.
- **Do not** do things which are not assigned to you.
- **Do not** “trade” tasks with other dressers without the approval of the wardrobe supervisor.
- Use common sense when placing pre-sets anywhere other than a chair in the dressing room or in the quick change area. Do not place garments and hats on the floor unless you are using a drop cloth, or unless the supervisor specifically says it is okay to place a particular item on the floor without a drop cloth. Never place a preset on a work bench, on a Genie lift or anywhere else that is likely to be dirty or greasy.
- If the actor asks you to change a track note, **do not** change it without asking the wardrobe supervisor. It is not your job to “make it better” for the actor. Your job is to follow instructions as written.
- **Do not** bother to try to memorize your track notes. Look at the notes during every show, even if you think you remember what is coming up. There are no prizes for memorizing your notes, but there *will be* a penalty if you miss a cue!
- Do not take your dresser track notes home, because more likely than not you will forget to bring them back. Leave the notes in the theater, in a safe but obvious place, so that they won’t end up in the trash. However, leave the notes where other people can find them, just in case you miss work the next day, somebody else can step into your track. This means don’t lock them inside your personal locker or hide them in a place no one will think to look.
- Sometimes you don’t get written notes and the supervisor gives you verbal instructions as the show goes along. Pay attention and do the best you can to remember what to do.

## 10. PUTTING ITEMS INTO STORAGE (either on a daily basis or for long-term storage)

- Check the labels. Most shows will label every single piece of clothing, hat or shoe with an actor’s name or number. Check this when you hang them up, when you lay them out for a preset, when you are doing laundry. You **MUST** have all the right items in the right places. You **CANNOT** put the wrong items on the wrong actor.
- Close any Velcro on any item on a hanger to prevent damage to other garments.
- Hang each item on the correct type of hanger. There are appropriate hangers  for shirts, heavy jackets, pants and skirts, items with hanging loops, linergie and more. Learn what hanger works best for each type of clothing.
- If a garment has hanging loops, use them!
- The industry standard is to hang all garments facing left, commonly called “chest left” or “face left”.
- Fasten up enough of the closures (zippers, buttons, hooks, etc.) so that the garment will not fall off the hanger while travelling. In most cases it is not necessary to fasten all of the closures.

- If items are excessively sweaty/wet, ask how to dry it before going into storage. This might involve hanging garments over fans, using Damp-Rid, etc.
- If items are excessively dirty (including makeup), ask the supervisor how to clean it before going into storage.
- Make sure all garments are turned right side out and that sleeves and pant legs are not bunched up.
- Make sure that all parts of a garment are kept together (such pants, vest & jacket together). Make sure you have both shoes of a pair together.
- Keep track of accessories: necktie, scarf, jewelry, purse, eyeglasses, etc.
- Store hats as instructed (sometimes in a box or laundry basket, sometimes with a hat stretcher, etc.) Never place heavy items on top of a hat that will crush it.
- Check every single item for repairs as it goes into storage: look for broken zippers, loose buttons, loose hook & eye, fraying fabric, ripped hems or seams, ripped linings, swing tacks, pit pad snaps, broken shoe laces, loose dance rubber, excessive dirt or makeup on any item. If there is time to fix a problem, do it now. If there isn't time to fix it properly, use your safety pins or needle and thread to make an emergency repair. As soon as you can, write down the repair with your paper and pen. Take the item to wardrobe at the end of the night and write it down on the repair list.

**11. FOLLOW INSTRUCTIONS** from the road crew. Even if you think you already know what you're doing, you don't know the show as well as the road crew does. Don't argue with them or say that you don't need their help.

The *only* exception to obeying instructions from the road crew is if you genuinely feel there will be an immediate safety issue, or if you are being asked to do something that you believe is illegal or immoral. In that case, talk to your wardrobe union steward as soon as possible to work out an accommodation.

**12. NO USE OF CELL PHONES, TABLETS or COMPUTERS ON DECK!!**



Ever. We mean it. Don't do it.

Even if the road crew and actors are doing it.

**13. PERSONAL EMERGENCIES WHILE ON THE JOB**

If you "must" have your phone with you because of an **actual** emergency in your personal life, you must inform your wardrobe union steward of the situation at the start of the call, and they will consult with the supervisor to decide when and if it is okay for you to have your phone onstage. You may be offered other accommodations, such as allowing you to leave the stage every so often to check your phone in the hallway.

Please be professional in your judgement of what constitutes an actual emergency. If a family member is life-threateningly ill or your house is on fire, that constitutes an emergency. Calling your kids to tell them a bedtime story or getting updates on your social media is not an emergency.

If you have not been granted permission to use your phone on deck, and you are observed using your phone during the show, you may be written up for substandard performance.

**14. DOWNTIME DURING THE SHOW**

Some shows have slow periods when there is nothing to do. This does not mean that you get to wander off. Remember that part of your job as a dresser is to be alert for emergency situations with your actors and their costumes, so stay in your assigned area even when you don't have a cue coming up. Don't go to sleep. Don't go to the break room for dinner. Your actor needs to know where to find you. If you need an urgent bathroom visit, let the supervisor or another dresser know you are leaving, and come right back ASAP.


During a performance, you don't get to choose your own break time, and most likely it will not be during intermission. In wardrobe, intermission is often the busiest time we have, cleaning up after Act One and getting ready for Act Two. Your supervisor will let you know when you can take a break, usually right before or right after intermission.

When you do get a personal break, do not leave the building to go to your car, the coffee shop or anywhere else. If you step outside for a quick cigarette, you must let the supervisor or wardrobe union steward know where you are, and then come back into the building as soon as possible.

You can bring a book, knitting or some other busywork, but do not let yourself get distracted from your job. Occasionally a supervisor will say that books and knitting are not allowed at all during a particular show. If this happens, obey the rule and don't complain out loud.

#### **15. WORK CALLS (also called "daywork" in the wardrobe department)**

Your number one job during a work call is to do the tasks assigned to you by the supervisor. Don't trade tasks with other workers. If you need help, ask for it, but don't expect everyone else to do your job for you.

During work calls you may bring a personal music player or your phone to play music  or audio books. Do not play your music out loud unless **all** of your co-workers agree to hear it. If even one of your co-workers does not want to listen to your choice of music, please use your personal headphones or turn it off.

Personal headphones are not allowed at all during a rehearsal or performance. You need to be able to hear everything around you so that you do not miss a cue, or so that you do not place yourself in danger by not hearing warnings.

#### **16. PAY ATTENTION TO YOUR JOB.**

Do not try to *watch* the show! Your job is to help the actors. If you are watching the show, it means you are not paying attention to your actor. You could also get run over with scenery, or maybe blown up by pyro.

#### **17. QUIET ONSTAGE DURING A PERFORMANCE**



Sometimes the actors or road crew will be very loud backstage. Do not take this as license to be loud yourself. When you're backstage, talk as little as possible and do it quietly. Even during the middle of a costume change offstage, your actor might start singing when his microphone turns on, with no warning to you.

#### **18. ALLERGIES**



Many people have allergies to perfume or heavily scented health and beauty products, or cats. Don't wear perfume to work at all. Limit the use of heavily scented lotions, soaps and

essential oils, as these can also cause problems for those with sensitivities. Please consider using unscented deodorant, hand lotions and even laundry detergent for yourself. Don't bring your cat to work.



## 19. WHAT IF YOU GET SICK WHEN YOU ARE SCHEDULED TO WORK

Unfortunately, most of us do not get paid sick days in our industry. Please use common sense about coming to work if you are sick. If you are seriously sick and/or contagious, stay home and let your wardrobe union steward or the business agent know as soon as possible, so we can find a replacement worker.

If your illness is minor and manageable, bring your own supplies such as tissues, medications, hand sanitizer, face masks, band aids. Don't presume that these things will be provided for you. Cover your cough or sneeze, wash your hands often, don't spread your germs.

If you come to work sick and your illness prevents you from actually performing your job (severe coughing, vomiting, too much time in the lavatory), you will be sent home and asked not to return until you are recovered.



## 2020 SPECIAL HEALTH AND SAFETY NOTICE

As a result of the pandemic of 2020, we will be entering an era of great uncertainty in our industry. This will be of special concern in the wardrobe department, where we work very closely with actors, as well as fellow dressers and stagehands. Social distancing and no-touch practices will be extremely difficult to maintain in wardrobe. It is totally unknown at this time what safety protocols and practices we will have to adopt. Expect masks and gloves to be the norm in the future, but be aware that other protocols may become necessary, as well.

Bottom line is that each and every one of us will need to stay on top of the latest health information available. ***Follow all health and safety directions and protocols required by the employer and by the client.*** If you have concerns, speak with your wardrobe union steward, who will coordinate with the employer and client to agree on solutions and accommodations.



## 20. END OF THE CALL

At the end of a call, don't presume you can run out the door when your own tasks are done. You may be asked to help other people finish their tasks, or there may be an emergency situation that you don't know about and we need your help, or the supervisor or wardrobe union steward may need to make announcements. Your wardrobe union steward will let you know when you are dismissed each day.



## 21. CASH TIPS

At some shows, your actors may give you a cash tip at the end of the run. If they do offer a tip, it is permitted for you to accept it, but do not make a fuss if you don't receive a tip. It is a courtesy from the actor to you, and it is not mandatory.

Please be kind to other dressers. Do not gloat if you get a bigger tip than the dresser next to you.



Consider sharing a few dollars of your tip with the laundry worker and stitcher, because actors usually don't think to tip these workers, and the dressers cannot do their own jobs without costumes that are clean and mended!

produced 10-24-19; health and safety updates on 8-22-20

### **MSDS on BARGE® CEMENT**

- Use product only in a well ventilated area or use a respirator if ventilation is inadequate. Stop using the product and get away from the area if you begin to feel drowsy, queasy or dizzy.
- If someone using the product loses consciousness, do not give mouth-to-mouth resuscitation if the vapors are still present, as the person attempting to revive the unconscious worker can also be affected. Call for medical help immediately.
- Do not ingest. If ingestion occurs, do not induce vomiting unless directed to do so by medical personnel. If vomiting occurs, keep the head as low as possible to keep the vomit out of the lungs.
- The vapor is heavier than air and will spread along the ground. As soon as you start to feel dizzy or drowsy, stand up and move away from the area. Do not sit down or lie down as that may increase your exposure.
- Wear eye protection. Work as close to an approved eye wash station as possible.
- Do not get it on your skin. Wear gloves and use craft sticks to apply it. Wear a long apron when using this product to keep it off your clothing. If the product gets on your clothing, change your clothes at once. Contaminated clothing must be washed before re-wearing.
- This product is highly flammable. Keep away from heat, sparks and flames. Take preventive measures to avoid static discharges.
- Apply glue to both surfaces you want to stick together, and allow proper amount of time for glue to cure before trying to adhere them. Allow plenty of time for the glue to set before the shoe will be used (preferably at least 4 hours).
- Spills should be collected with non-combustible, absorbent materials such as sand, earth or vermiculite. This contaminated material plus any original containers should not be disposed in regular trash. Hazardous trash regulations must be observed.
- Keep the product in the original container and keep it tightly closed whenever not in use. Even of couple of minutes of leaving the container open will result in the entire contents curing and becoming unusable.
- Do not allow product directly into a sink, and do not pour into a drain that may lead directly to a river or lake. Product is extremely toxic to aquatic life.
- If a fire occurs, use a dry chemical fire extinguisher. Do not use water.
- Eating, drinking and smoking is prohibited in areas where this product is used or stored. After using this product, you must wash your hands and face before eating, drinking, smoking or using the lavatory.