

Usher training scenarios

With house manager's answers in parentheses after each one - June 2009.

As a GRSF usher, what should you do when -

Before the performance:

The usher meeting is over, but doors are not yet open.

(Get into your assigned position quietly, watching and listening for the word from the house manager that the house is open.)

The house manager tells you that it's time to open the house and let patrons in. The entrance doors are locked. (Immediately tell house manager who will radio stage manager whose assistant has those keys to open.)

A middle-aged woman shuffles into the lobby, It's 98 degrees outside. She shuffles over to a bench, sits with a big audible sigh. When you approach her to see if she might need help, she retorts, "don't you have any "handicapped" facilities here?"

(Rather than defending that yes we have "handicapped facilities, it's more important to empathize and find out what we could do right now to assist in her comfort, gain rapport, then discover what happened that led to her question. Was the signing unclear, was her idea of "handicapped" facilities different from what we have, etc. How could we have made it easier for her?)

You are checking tickets and there are a lot of people waiting to get in. A few of your good friends you haven't seen for a while greet you and want to chat.

(Greet them briefly and let them know you'd love to talk, but are on duty. See if you can meet up with them somewhere after you are off duty.)

You are checking tickets house left. A man walking with a cane approaches. He's part of a group seated together. His seat is D24.

(Let him know there will be about 15 steps for him to do, with hand railings available and ask if he's OK doing them. If he is, let him take his time. If not, offer to see if we could exchange his tickets and those of a companion, for two in the accessible area, where he would not have to do any stairs. Get house manager's attention and she will check with box office and exchange the tickets if that's what he decides to do. We will try our best to seat them as close to their group as possible.)

You are at the bottom of the stairs checking tickets and see a teenager with a leg cast on. It's a walking cast and she's doing quite well moving across the lobby.

(You might just check in with her and ask if she's OK with the steps. If so, give her space and cheer her on. If not, offer her the accessible entrance, if her seat number is more accessible from that door.)

You are at the bottom of the stairs checking tickets and a young man comes towards you with a noticeable limp.

(Check his ticket and if he appears to be daunted by the steps, just ask if he's going to be OK with the stairs. Otherwise, I wouldn't comment. His limp may be the result of a condition he's had for a long time and he's adapted just fine to it. Or it may be the result of a recent injury. Be attentive and read the patron. Offer him the accessible entrance if that appears to be what he needs.)

You are at the top of the stairs handing out playbills and you see a man breathing heavily, short of breath and clinging to the railing as he slowly comes up. It looks like he suffers from congestive heart problems.

(If he is already up the stairs, just let him stay there as long as he needs to and catch his breath. Don't make him talk until he can, then ask if he needs anything. Offer that he could use the accessible exit for intermission and

after the performance if that would be easier for him, but don't make him go back down the stairs, unless he's just barely started up them.)

A couple enters the lobby. The woman accompanies her spouse, who is in an electric scooter.
(Greet them both and make sure their tickets are in the accessible area and direct or help them over to that area where the accessibility ushers will help them to their seats.)

A young couple enters the lobby with a 9-month old baby who is asleep in the man's arms. You are checking tickets at the bottom of the stairs. The woman says, "I know you don't usually allow babies, but ours won't be any trouble. She will just sleep through the performance and not bother anyone."
(Say something like, I'm sorry ma'am, I'm sure your little girl is just wonderful, but I am not going to be able to let her come in. Let me get the house manager and see what we can do for you." Get house manager, I will explain the policy, exchange their tickets for another performance when they can get a sitter or have one of them see it now and the other later, etc.)

You are handing out playbills at the top of the stairs. The house manager has just flashed the lobby lights two times.
(Two light flashes means 5 minutes until the performance starts. Let the seating assistant ushers inside, who can not see the lights flashing, know that it is 5 minutes.)

You are inside assisting with seating and a patron enters with a camera bag hanging over his shoulder.
(Let him know that we do not allow cameras in the theater and offer to keep his camera locked in the box office during the performance, or he could return it to his car if there is time. All ushers, including hosts, should be on the lookout for cameras, so we catch them in time for patrons to bring them back to their cars.)

You are inside assisting with seating. The 5 minute warning has been relayed to you and you notice a large area in the center of the theater with empty seats.
(Relay this message back to the lobby to let house manager know that we are missing a large group of people. Perhaps a bus is late and we will need to hold the start of the performance.)

The performance is about to begin and the house manager has told you to close the theater doors and go in. A patron hasn't finished drinking a beverage not allowed in the theater and asks you to keep it for him/her.
(Let patron know you will not be able to do that and give him/her the choice of disposing of it and going in, or staying in the lobby to finish it and being late seated by the house manager. Late seating is according to the stage manager's timing and in the least disruptive place.)

During the Performance:

A patron has brought food or a beverage, other than a bottle of water with cap, into the theater and begins to consume it during Paul's pre-show speech.

(Discretely get persons attention, reiterate no food or beverages in theater, either take item from them and dispose in lobby, or ask that they return to the lobby to finish it. Prevention is best and all of us need to watch for such things *before* they get into the theater.)

The doors are shut, Paul has just started his pre-performance speech and you are the usher staying on the landing to help with late seating. A group of 6 people arrives in the lobby.

(Let them know you can help them and to come up. Check their tickets, give them a playbill, and tell them where there seats are and send them in, if they can be in place by time his speech ends.)

You are an usher seated during the performance and a patron begins text messaging.

(If possible, discretely get his/her attention and ask him/her to stop or to quietly leave the theater. If the person cannot be reached discretely, remember who it is and say something or point person out to house manager to approach at intermission.)

You are an usher seated during the performance and a patron has a coughing spell, gets up and leaves the theater, what do you do?

(Let the patron go or assist him/her out only if necessary. The house manager or head usher will assist the person in the lobby with water, cough drops etc. and will late seat.)

You are an usher seated during the performance and the Stage Manager announces evacuation for a fire in the building. What do you do?

(Stay Calm and help calm patrons. Turn on flashlight and watch for direction from head usher (house left) or house manager (house right). Work together to open theater doors and direct patrons out of theater at main right, left and special needs entrances. Assist any patrons that need help. Move patrons outside at least 50 feet from the building. Await further instruction.)

You are an usher seated during the performance and a patron gets up, moves to the aisle and stands there watching.

(Discretely let patron know that actors use the aisles for entrances and exits and encourage him/her to re-take their seat as soon as possible.)

You are an accessibility usher seated for the performance. One of the patrons in your area gets up and shuffles toward the curtain of the accessible entrance without her walker.

(In this case follow the patron and assist her exit as smoothly and quietly as possible. Once in vestibule with door shut, ask what further help she needs. Check with house manager to late seat.)

You are an usher seated during the performance and the Stage manager announces a tornado.

(Stay calm and help calm patrons. Get directions from head usher (house left) or house manager (house right) Evacuate theater using shop door on house left and special needs door on house right use corner stairways. Assist patrons with limited mobility. DO NOT USE ELEVATORS. Assist patrons to fill in the designated rooms. See Usher Emergency Procedures sheet. Await official all-clear announcement and further instruction. Assist patrons in calmly returning to their seats in the theater if performance will be resuming or in leaving PAC if not.)

During Intermission:

You are assigned to stay in the theater and monitor the stage. You need to use the restroom.

(Coordinate with other ushers as intermission begins and have floating usher cover your post while you quickly use one of the auxiliary restroom and return.)

You are on the landing directing patrons to auxiliary restrooms. A woman comes by and complains about how cold it is in the theater.

(Let her know we have shawls available and that you'll check and see if there are any left. They are kept behind the counter at the book concession.)

You are monitoring the ladies rooms. There is a long line in the lobby ladies room when A wheelchair bound patron joins the line.

(Ask other patrons to let wheelchair through as soon as the accessible stall is available and thanks them for doing so.)

A patron spills the cup of coffee she has just purchased.

(Patron can check with concession to see if she can get a new one. Get towels and "Wet Floor" sign from house manager and mop up spill while keeping patrons away from spill area.)

Intermission is ending and you are about to close the door. A patron has just purchased books and a T-shirt that he or she does not want to carry into the theater.

(Offer to keep them in the Box Office where they can pick up after the performance. Inform patron where that is located and tell house manager if possible. If you have time, put Patron's name on the bag.)

Post-Performance:

You are thanking patrons for coming and collecting unwanted used playbills. Your good friend who attended the performance comes by and asks, "So what did *you* think of the show?"

(Politely ask if you can talk about it later when you're off duty. As ushers we do not engage in discussions about the performance.)

The performance has ended and you are thanking patrons for coming and collecting used playbills. A couple from out-of-town asks where they can go out for a drink. [or a meal.]

(Ask what kind of place or meal they are looking for and if you know Winona well, give them a couple of options. Other wise, a referral sheet from "Visit Winona" will be in the Box office with information, directions and phone numbers to the bars and restaurants in the area.

You are preparing the theater for the next evening's performance. You find a cell phone under one of the chairs.

(Turn in to house manager, along with any other personal items you find. Lost and Found is in the Box Office at the theater during the run, and at GRSF office afterward.)