

for EABA™

Space Opera Support #5

15 Startown Hazards



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Introduction

Cities can provide many challenges to a group of characters. Aside from all the normal difficulties that come from dealing with millions of people, at times it can seem like fate itself is trying to cause trouble for the characters while they are in a city.

15 Startown Hazards offers a selection of such hazards. While the title refers to a startown (a city built around a starport), the hazards can apply to any city the characters find themselves in. Whether you want a hazard that can slow the characters down in their adventure, be used as a source of a sidequest or even take up a full adventure, you are sure to find options here that you can use in your own game.

All the skills and system details discussed in **15 Startown Hazards** are for the EABA system, published by BTRC. Converting the details to another system should prove fairly simple if you need to.

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SOS – Space Opera Support

The Space Opera Support line from Polgarus Games is an aid for busy gamemasters running a game in a space opera setting. No setting is assumed – the products are intended to be as generic as possible so they can be used in most settings. If you need quick adventure ideas, a planet or space station for the PCs to visit, or even passengers to travel on the PCs ship and cause trouble, Space Opera Support is the answer!

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Falling Danger

In any city where there are tall buildings the danger of falling objects is present. In some cases the objects may be messy but non-lethal, but even a small object can do some damage if dropped from enough height. Usually the falling object has been accidentally dropped, but if the characters are paranoid it may be hard to convince them that it was an accident!

There is almost no limit to what could fall on or near a character. Here are a few suggestions:

- Water (if the characters are lucky it may be clean water, but more likely dirty water that has just been used for cleaning). If they're lucky, the bucket won't be falling with the water. No damage, they are just wet.
- Rubbish from a rubbish bin (food wrappers & leftovers, loose bits of paper, cans, etc). *1d+2 non-lethal hits.*
- A small souvenir like object (thrown through a window as part of an argument). *3d+0 half-lethal hits.*
- A toy (a doll, or a ball, or some sort of toy projectile – perhaps even a toy gun that looks very real at first glance). *3d+0 half-lethal hits.*
- Clothes (perhaps after someone has just broken up with his/her ex-partner). *1d+0 non-lethal hits.*
- A suitcase (like the last suggestion – the suitcase could even fly open on the way down, spilling its contents everywhere). *3d+2 lethal hits.*
- A suicide jumper (but was it suicide?) *5d+0 lethal hits.*
- Construction materials (new building, renovations, etc). *4d+0 lethal hits.*

Characters have a chance to get out of the way of a falling object – *if they succeed at an Average (7) Agility task, they manage to avoid being hit.* Optionally, the gamemaster may give the characters a chance to spot the hazard before they are in a position to be hit by it.

Procession

In the crowded streets of the city it's not always easy to move quickly from point to point. Movement, especially fast movement, becomes even more difficult when your path is blocked by a slow-moving procession of some kind. This hazard should be encountered when the player characters are in a hurry, such as when they have limited time to reach a specific place in the city or when they're involved in a chase, and you want to increase the tension in the game. This hazard assumes the characters are on foot, but it can be just as effective at slowing the characters down if they are in a vehicle.

The first step in implementing this hazard is determining the size of the procession. You can either roll randomly on the following table or simply select an entry that fits your needs at this time.

D6	Procession Size
1	Small procession, 6d6 people on foot; hazard remains in effect for a minute.
2	Small procession mixed, 7d6 people on foot and 1d6 cars/floats; hazard remains in effect for 1d3 minutes.
3	Medium procession, 6d6x2 people on foot; hazard remains in effect for 1d3+2 minutes.
4	Medium procession mixed, 7d6x2 people on foot and 2d6+2 cars/floats; hazard remains in effect for 1d6+2 minutes.
5	Large procession, 6d6x3 people on foot; hazard remains in effect for 2d6 minutes.
6	Large procession mixed, 7d6x3 people on foot and 3d6+4 cars/floats; hazard remains in effect for 3d6+4 minutes.

Trying to move through the area of the procession can be difficult. *If a character tries, have them make a Fate roll (not a Fate check – just a normal roll with their Fate attribute using the “best three”). If the result is good enough to*

Possible NPC Names

Betsey Mansi

Shirleen Brunston

Boyd Raducha

Van Mcquitty

Usha Vent

Santos Neurohr

Darnell Uhm

Jacquiline Vallieres

Aubrey Leese

Jan Creekmur

Toshiko Primack

succeed at an *Easy (5) task*, movement is possible but only at 1/4 the normal rate. If the roll was good enough to succeed at an *Average (7) task* movement is possible at half the normal rate. If they failed the task roll movement is impossible at the moment due to the procession bunching close together (check again after 10 seconds).

A roll should be made for every character trying to move through the procession. A result where some characters are able to move through the procession while others aren't is perfectly acceptable!

In case the characters need to move along the same path as the procession, the procession moves at a rate of 50 meters a minute. This is not a suggested use for this hazard though. It is better used as something the characters must cross and not something they move with or against.

Exactly what the procession is (a funeral, a protest, a celebration) is left up to the gamemaster to decide.

Loose Cover

Every large city has to run most of their utilities underground, from sewer systems and stormwater drains to communications, gas and in some cases power. While most of the pipes used are usually too small to allow a person to pass through them (with the exception of sewers and drains), even small pipes have access and junction points. In cases where the access points are below ground and have only a simple cover, there is a potential for a hazard.

When a cover is not properly set into place the *first individual to step on the cover must make a Challenging (9) Agility roll; on a failed roll the character or creature stumbles and takes 1d+0 lethal hits to the leg as well as falling prone.*

On a successful check the character or creature simply stumbles and knocks the cover off but is otherwise unaffected by the hazard. *Particularly small characters (like a*

child) that fail the Agility roll must make a second Challenging (9) Agility roll or slip into the now open hole.

Any effects that occur from falling into the hole (damaging something in the hole, taking further damage from equipment in the hole) are left up to the gamemaster and may depend on what they have fallen into.

Sports Event

The entire city is ecstatic – one of its sports teams (gamemaster to choose the sport) has finally made it to the finals for the first time in decades. All over the city there are banners, posters and other decorations up urging the team on, and many people in the city are talking about the upcoming game.

While this won't affect the characters too much during the lead up to the game, on the day of the game everything in the city closes down. Shops and businesses close for the day, public transport is no longer running, and even hotels and the starport are operating on skeleton staff. If the characters go outside, it's like they're in a ghost town.

This can impact the characters in several ways. If they need anything (items, paperwork), they won't be able to get it on the day of the event (too bad if they have a time limit they are up against). Criminals may see this as a perfect opportunity to step up their activities; they could target the characters, or the characters may come across them in the middle of their crime spree. Finally the aftermath of the game will see the streets fill with people either in celebration of their win, or angry at their loss. If the team lost, it is very possible that the situation could turn into a riot.

Possible Ship Names

Time Bandit

Allegiance

Maverick

Lady Luck

Saga

Retriever

Deception

Merinda

Quetzal

Pimpernel

Impetuous

Runaway Vehicle

Most vehicle accidents happen suddenly and without warning. In game terms these cases often boil down to simply not being in the way when it happens if you're a pedestrian, or making a driving skill check to avoid the accident if you are driving a nearby vehicle. A runaway vehicle is something different.

It could be some thieves on a joyride. It could be a vehicle driving down a hill that has had its brakes fail. It could even be a vehicle that is rolling away because the owner didn't park it correctly. In all cases, onlookers have a chance to see the runaway vehicle and get out of the way.

Anyone in the path of the oncoming vehicle *must make a Challenging (9) Agility roll to get out of the way in time. If they fail, they are hit by the vehicle and take 5d+0 lethal hits.*

Truly heroic characters may attempt to save someone else from the hazard. *An Average (7) Agility roll allows the character to push any one character within 3 meters of their location out of harms way. If they do this, they must then make a Hard (11) Agility roll to also get out of the way of the runaway vehicle themselves.*

Swarm of Thieves

In crowded marketplaces it is not uncommon for a band of pickpockets to work together, descending on the area like a swarm of locusts. While this could be played out as a series of pickpocket skill rolls, the gamemaster can elect to present the situation as a specific hazard to the marketplace.

What this boils down to is that the longer the character spends in the market, the greater the chance that they will have their pockets picked (this chance may be increased or decreased depending on the characters appearance – someone who appears “well off” is more likely to

be targeted than someone wearing rags). Once they have been in the market all the characters should make an Awareness roll, with the difficulty of the task being determined by how long they spend in the market. *A brief stay (just passing through) will have an Easy (5) difficulty, while a long stay (spending time looking for just the right item) could have a Challenging (9) or even Hard (11) difficulty.*

If they fail the roll something is stolen from their pocket (most likely their wallet) unless the player has said beforehand that they are taking specific steps to prevent such loss. If the character simply succeeds at the task, nothing happens (the character doesn't have anything stolen, but the area is too crowded for the character to have spotted the pickpocket attempt). *If they succeed at the task by more than four points they spot one of the thieves in action.*

If the character makes any sort of attempt to call out or stop the pickpocket, all the other thieves working the crowd quietly try to disappear (leaving their accomplice behind).

Strike!

The characters have been unlucky enough to run into industrial action between a union and a major employer (either the government or a corporation). As a result, the union members have now gone on strike.

The gamemaster has many options on how the strike can affect the characters, depending on who exactly is striking. The strike could be at the starport (making it impossible to move cargo in or out, or to even get a ship refuelled). The strike could involve hotel workers (meaning the characters receive almost non-existent service; no food, no room cleaning, etc). The public transport industry could be on strike (at least doubling any time required to move through the city from all

Possible City Names

Redcliffe

Grafton

Benalla

Henzada

Lashio

Virum

Chiatura

Samtredia

Irbid

Dunedin

Kasala

the chaos on the roads). In a worst-case scenario the strike could involve more than one industry as other unions join in, throwing the city into total pandemonium.

The strike will last 1d6 days unless the characters have some way of becoming involved and help calm the situation down.

Deadly Mold

At times weather conditions can be perfect for allowing mold to grow. While most of the time this isn't a problem (just an inconvenience for those who have to clean it), the characters are unlucky enough to find a patch of mold that proves to be dangerous.

Even though it looks like any other mold, this growth will surprise anyone who disturbs it by suddenly releasing a cloud of spores that clings to everything within a 5-meter radius. Any spores landing on the skin cause immediate irritation, giving a nasty stinging sensation and causing the skin to go red and puff up. A more dangerous risk is getting the spores in the eyes or inhaling them.

A character has a chance to avoid the worst of the spores by making a Challenging (9) Agility task. If they succeed, they manage to avoid inhaling any spores or getting them in their eyes, and only get the spores on their hands or arms. The character takes 1d+1 non-lethal hits from the spores irritating the skin.

If they fail, they are covered in spores (on the skin and in the eyes) as well as breathing them in. *The character takes 3d+0 half-lethal hits, from skin irritation and damage to the lungs.* The character also has difficulty with their vision for the next 2d6 hours (making their vision blurry and increasing any task that requires vision by one difficulty level). Their sight returns to normal after the elapsed time.

To add insult to injury, the cloud of spores will drift in the air and start a new patch of mold if they land on a moist surface. When they learn of the problem the authorities will cordon off the area, not allowing anyone or anything in or out until they have hosed the area down with strong chemicals designed to kill the mold. Whether these chemicals do what they are supposed to or not is up to the gamemaster!

Toxic Spill

The characters are near a tanker transporting toxic chemicals to a factory when it is involved in an accident. The content of the truck begins to spill out onto the road, forming a dull green-coloured mist as it contacts the air and splashes on the ground.

While some players may immediately panic and assume chlorine gas, this chemical thankfully isn't as nasty. *Even so, anyone caught in the mist (its a Challenging (9) Agility task to get out of the way) must make a Formidable (13) Health task. If they fail they take 2d+1 half-lethal hits, and they have severe nausea & dizziness for 4d6 minutes (the nausea leaves after this time – the dizziness will last for a further 1d3 hours). If they succeed at the Health task they suffer a coughing fit and feel light headed while in the mist, but are otherwise okay.*

The mist will spread to cover an area 100 meters around the accident site within one minute. The mist will slowly dissipate on its own (reducing the area it covers by half every 30 minutes). A light breeze will simply shift the area of effect, while a strong breeze will get rid of the mist entirely.

Authorities will arrive on the scene with 2d6 minutes and start clearing away or rescuing everyone who hasn't already left. They won't allow anyone within the crash site, no matter what the reason.

Possible NPC Names

Kelvin Rhoten

Rudy Guilliams

Lucretia Brazel

Rudolph Mazzei

Ione Theuret

Malcolm Dewindt

India Ishak

Randal Tidmore

Vernice Nish

Gerardo Panameno

Loren Busbee

Toxic Dust

This hazard is less visible than the previous one, and is usually a long-term problem. Some large-scale destructive event (the destruction of a building, a huge fire, etc) has released a lot of dust that is contaminated with toxic chemicals into the surrounding area. This hazard has three distinct stages, with symptoms (and the game effects) varying depending on the stage.

1. The initial destruction: Any dust generated here is visible to everyone, and unless the event is unexpected precautions are easy to take. *Exposed characters must make a Hard (11) Health check every 5 minutes. If they fail, after 1d6 hours the character will take 2d+1 lethal hits.* They will also develop a headache and a feeling of fatigue and nausea. Finally, if the player rolls a 1 or 2 on a d6, they will feel short of breath. The physical symptoms will last for 1d6+3 days, and will make any task attempted one level higher in difficulty.

2. Dust lying on the ground: Once the dust has settled, there is still the problem that the dust is laying on all the surrounding surfaces. A person can touch a contaminated surface and get the dust on their hands, or the wind could pick up the dust and make it airborne again. Most of this dust will be washed away after a storm has passed through the area. *Characters must succeed at a Formidable (13) Health task every 30 minutes that they are in the contaminated area.* Failure means that after 1d6 days the character will feel generally unwell (like they are catching something, but it never fully develops). This will last for 1d6 days, during which time any skill checks requiring concentration are one level higher in difficulty.

3. Dust inside: In some ways this is the worst stage, as it is the least visible and hardest to get rid of. Some of the dust can make its way inside buildings, staying there for months or even years unless the building is decontaminated (a slow and costly exercise). *Characters must make an Easy (5) Health check every day they spend in the contaminated building.* If they fail, after 1d6 weeks the character will start to suffer from daily migraines, and feel constantly fatigued – these effects will last for 2d6 weeks after the character has left the area.

In addition there is a chance of long-term health damage occurring. *The character must continue to make an Easy (5) Health check every week after they fail the first check – if they fail for that week, one attribute (any attribute but Fate, gamemasters choice) is lowered by 1 point. No attribute can go below 50% of its original value, and hospital treatment (one week for every attribute point lost) will restore lost attribute values.*

Gamemasters can of course change around the symptoms, making them more or less serious.

Bomb Threat

While the characters are involved in something complex and preferably illegal, in the midst of their activities a huge contingent of law enforcement and other authorities suddenly arrive. The authorities demand that everyone evacuate the area – a bomb threat has been made, and the authorities are taking it seriously.

The characters will have to deal with the panic caused by the bomb threat, the additional people who will crowd the area to watch what is going on, and possibly trying to hide what they have been up to from the authorities.

Possible Club Names

Mesata

Baraki

Fidels

Hi-Fi

Elio's

Jet

Afterdark

Liquid

Kaleido

Deco

Platform One

Air Conditioning Surprise

Almost every modern building has air conditioning of some sort, and in the future this trend will only continue. Air conditioning systems make it very easy for germs to spread to a lot of people very quickly. Even if the system has some sort of filtering system that attempts to kill any such disease, it only takes one poorly maintained system to affect hundreds if not thousands of people.

Characters need to make a Health check when they enter a diseased building to resist the effects of the disease in the air. Additional checks may be required if the characters spend any length of time in the building (perhaps one every hour for a low threat bug, or one every ten minutes for a more nasty bug). The precise symptoms of the disease are up to the gamemaster, but here are a few possibilities:

- A cold like disease with more severe symptoms. *It is an Average (7) Health check to resist the disease (check every hour). The disease takes 2 days to incubate then hits suddenly, causing the victim to temporarily lose 1d6 points of Strength and in most cases requiring the victim to take to bed. After 1d3 days in bed the symptoms start to leave (and points to start returning to Strength). One point will be regained every day, and it will take 1d6 more days before the character feels totally better.*
- A nastier version of the above disease, *requiring a Challenging (9) Health check every 30 minutes but taking 5 days to incubate if the character fails. When the symptoms hit, the character will temporarily lose d6+1 points from both their Strength and Health. It takes 1d6 days before the symptoms start to leave (and points from the attributes start to be regained). One point will be regained to either Strength or Health (players choice) every 2 days. It will be a further 2d6 days until the character feels totally better.*
- A stomach bug *with an Easy (5) Health check to resist*, but requiring checks every 15 minutes. Symptoms hit within 24 hours, causing severe diarrhea, nausea and possibly vomiting. The symptoms will last for 1d6 days, and make any task the victim attempts at least one level of difficulty higher.

The longer the time for onset, the more difficult it may be for authorities to track down the source of the outbreak (although if enough people get sick the cause should be fairly obvious). Depending on the severity of the disease the authorities may simply send out a public warning, or they may try to track down and quarantine everyone who has been exposed to the disease (for fear that it will spread further).

In most cases, unless another character is spending a lot of time in close quarters with a sick character they are unlikely to catch the disease themselves. If the gamemaster wishes, they can have other characters make the same health checks as the sick character, but at a lower difficulty.

Food Poisoning

Like the previous hazard, this one can affect a lot of people fairly quickly. The poisoning may be caused by a contaminated product used in the food (a particular meat for example), poor hygiene while the food was prepared, poor food storage between when it was made and when it was served, or even contaminated water that has been used in the cooking and preparation of the food.

Possible symptoms that a character could experience include nausea, abdominal pain, vomiting, diarrhea, fever, headache or fatigue. The symptoms of food poisoning can appear within a few hours, but in some cases can actually take days to appear depending on which microbe is causing the poisoning.

Possible NPC Names

Lisa Bolduc

Tony Rittenhouse

Mike Wheatley

Cindy Esquibel

Joshua Mcfall

Tony Mattingly

Dale Polson

Bruce Benn

Jacob Bosco

Carolyn Cummins

Dennis Hague

When characters eat contaminated food they will need to make a Health check to resist getting sick. The gamemaster should decide in advance the difficulty of the task (only one check needs to be made for each serve of contaminated food), how long the symptoms will take to appear, and any precise affects on the characters' attributes or skills. A few examples (not modelled on any particular form of food poisoning):

- *Challenging (9) Health check to resist.* Symptoms (within 3 hours) are severe abdominal pain, headache and fatigue. Symptoms last 1d6 days, and any task the victim attempts while sick is +3 points in difficulty higher.
- *Hard (11) Health check to resist.* Symptoms (2 days later) are nausea, vomiting, fever and fatigue. *Symptoms last 3d6 days and in severe cases (failing a second Hard (11) Health check) require the character to be admitted to hospital.* The character is unable to do anything and requires full bed rest for the first 1/2 of the rolled poisoning time, and only perform minor tasks (at two levels of difficulty higher) until the end of the poisoning time.

Possible Bar Names

Water Rat

The Brewery

Zu Bar

Captain's Bar

The Watering Hole

Burleigh Arms

Flying Pig

The Empress

Rat and Parrot

Five Bells

The Green Dragon

Sleeping Ivy

Sleeping Ivy looks like any other ivy plant, but is at its best once a year when it blooms, becoming covered all over with small white flowers. While the flowers look very pretty, when they are fully open they have a sedative effect on anyone breathing in their scent. Any living creature that comes within 2 meters of a large patch of flowering sleeping ivy must *succeed at a Challenging (9) Health roll. Failure means they start to take 2d+0 non-lethal hits every 5 seconds they stay within 2 meters of the sleeping ivy. If any attribute drops to 0d+0 or lower (because of damage penalties), the character falls asleep for 1d6 hours.*

Sleeping creatures are helpless. If someone slaps or wounds them they can be woken as normal, but loud noises don't affect them. When the character reawakens, all non-lethal damage sustained from the plant is removed and that plant will no longer affect the character.

Luckily the flowers on the ivy only open for one day before dying off. Any plant the characters discover is likely to be in a very out-of-the-way location – perhaps at the end of an alley or on the wall of an abandoned building.

At the gamemasters discretion sleeping ivy could be an extremely rare plant (with few people aware of its existence), or a genetically engineered plant that has somehow “escaped” from where it is being cultivated (who created it and why it has been created could lead to many follow-on adventures).

Donations

Depending on the nature of the campaign this could be played up as humorous, something that's very annoying (to both player and character), or even something that causes paranoia in the characters as they try to uncover a hidden meaning.

While staying in the current city, the characters are hounded at every turn by members from a charity or foundation asking them for donations. The charity is familiar to the characters, and they will see many other collectors around the city as they travel through it. Anyone they ask will say that the charity usually has a fundraising effort at this time of year.

Almost no matter where the characters go or what the characters are doing, a collector will be nearby to ask them for a donation. If the characters are trying to follow someone discretely, the collector will try to hold them up by engaging

them in conversation as they try to get a donation. If the characters are trying to hide and observe something or someone the collector will call them out and draw attention to the characters.

Even if the charity hands out some sort of token for giving a donation, by the time they run into the next collector the token will have somehow fallen off or gone missing. If the characters cause any harm to a collector, a huge public outcry will follow from the “callous thugs” attacking those trying to help the less fortunate, and the authorities will do their best to find those responsible.

If the characters visit the city again at a later date, no collectors will be seen anywhere.

Bonus – News Reporter

In any of the hazards that the characters find themselves in above, there is a chance that a news reporter will be nearby to see them handle the situation and capture the moment on film. If they act heroically, the reporter may spin a story about how an average citizen has acted out of kindness and saved the day. If they have acted poorly or have committed a crime, the reporter will have a story on the social decay in the city and the lack of law officers available to catch common criminals.

Either way, the characters may have to deal with their faces being shown in news reports. Not something they may want to happen if they are in hiding or working undercover!

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