



Safety and Production Guidelines

Most safety on the set is just common sense, but in the pressures of filmmaking common sense often gets thrown to the wind. Every film must have a safety meeting every day filming takes place outlining the potential dangers for the day and mentioning precautions that need to take place to avoid problems. This can be an informal five minute meeting between the assistant director and film department heads (DP, sound, director, art). Often this meeting is part of a larger production planning meeting that takes place every morning outlining the shot list and shooting schedule for the day. You need to conduct this safety meeting everyday that you film, even if only briefly and informally. Generally, danger on the set comes from the following areas and you should take precautions accordingly. Normally, the Assistant Director is the safety enforcement officer on the set.

GENERAL CAUSALITY

This involves unsafe placements of sets, props, equipment, and cables so people trip and injure themselves unnecessarily. The prop master should give a daily report as to that day's props and any and all hazardous threats related to the same. Any sharp edged props (including knives) should be handled with great care. Horseplay should never be tolerated at any time while cast and crew are present on the set. No person should be coaxed into handling any prop that causes them concern.

ELECTRICAL HAZARDS

Since large amounts of electricity are used for lights - the danger of blowing out circuits, overloading circuits and even starting a fire or electrocuting someone are always a hazard. Your lighting person should be familiar with capacity limits and safe procedures for drawing and using electricity. If you are using more than two 650 watt bulbs or one 1000 watt bulb on a single home electrical circuit, you are in danger of blowing out the circuit. There may be several wall plugs on one circuit - so don't just assume each wall plug is a separate circuit. A normal home has about five different circuits, but this can vary. Become familiar with where the circuit breaker box is, or have extra fuses for the circuits. Power should be turned off when plugging or unplugging high wattage equipment. To unplug any equipment, always grab the plug firmly and pull, do not grab the cord.

FIRE HAZARDS

Placing powerful lights near flammable materials (e.g. curtains) for several hours on end can cause a fire. People smoking (including in film smoking) on a set with scattered paper and flammable materials and set dressing around can cause a fire. You should have a small fire extinguisher present on all sets. Obviously using a fire in the film (e.g. campfire or part of a set burning) can be a hazard.

FIREARMS

Any time guns with live ammunition are used on the set a licensed firearms expert is required by law to be present on the set supervising the scene. However, even the use of unloaded weapons or rubber or fake weapons can be a hazard in that when the police or neighbors see what looks like a weapon they may assume that it is and often act first and ask questions later. The safest choice for films made on this short notice is not to include weapons in your film. And never include weapons in your film where they are displayed in a public place unless you have a city permit that specifies that and have cleared that permission.

ANIMALS

Snakes and deadly animals can be a hazard on the set and you need to have an exotic animal handler on the set to work with these. Rates per day for such people (who will often bring their own animals) may range from \$500 on up. Ordinary household animals need to be treated safely on the set or there could be legal action from the Humane Society. If you are doing anything other than very ordinary shots of even household pets on a set, the Humane Society likes to be notified so they can be on the set. Make sure you have a place for the animals to rest apart out of the sun and away from the crowded set where they could get hurt. Have plenty of water and food for them.

CHILDREN, THE ELDERLY, AND THE DISABLED

Special precautions need to be made with children on the set to keep them from hazards that adults would normally avoid. That is why a parent or guardian must be with them at all times. Minors can only be filmed so long without having a break (usually in the 2-4 hour range depending on age). Also, special precautions need to be made on the set for the elderly and disabled. Again this is common sense, but it is more likely that an unbalanced elderly person might trip over power cables running everywhere than a grip. Passage from one part of the set to another may be impeded for a disabled person. Preparations need to be made for these contingencies.

STUNTS

Even what are considered normal actions in everyday life can be considered stunts in filmmaking; e.g. tripping. And if in performing your script, an actor attempts a minor fall and hurts themselves, you could be liable. Any stunts, even minor ones need to be planned out and rehearsed so no one is hurt. Larger stunts should only be performed by licensed stuntmen and only after very careful preparation and rehearsal. Fights should be carefully rehearsed so no one gets hurt and should be staged by a professional stuntman. Truly dangerous stunts: falling from buildings, car crashes, car hits, death defying stunts, etc. should not be attempted in your short film.

DRIVING AND MOVING SHOTS

Careful preparation needs to be made for any moving shot. All traffic laws must be followed, and the person driving the car (especially if it is an actor on camera) should never be distracted by too much direction or while he or she is driving. Any moving shot on a public street requires a permit obtainable through the Mayor's Office and often requires police officers to be present. If a sizable number of crew are present on the street (e.g. more than two) during filming it can create a distracting hazard to other motorists and cause accidents. This is why permits are required. Also, blocking traffic to get a shot is not allowed unless police officers are present. The production team needs to make sure shots are planned out and rehearsed in advance so an accident knocking down heavy equipment does not happen.

OTHER HAZARDS

These will vary from film to film and you need to use common sense to spot these. For example, if you are filming in high places, you need to take precautions that all actors or crew are not put in jeopardy of falling. Filming at night presents its own hazards in terms of people not seeing potential hazards early enough. You need to brainstorm potential threats on the set and be prepared for them - e.g. rope off sections of the set to cast and crew when not in use. Be careful in having a lot of guests on the set. Since they will be least familiar with what you are doing they potentially will stumble into the most danger. The safest thing is to close the set to guests; but if you do have guests, assign one crew member responsible for looking after them.

FIRST AID

The Assistant Director (or designated safety officer) should have directions and phone numbers to the nearest emergency rooms to all locations at which the crew will be filming. There should be a basic first aid kit on every set. These are easily obtainable at most drug

stores. There should be one person on the set who has some first aid training designated as the first aid person who can see if a minor injury or medical condition that arises can be dealt with on the set or if it needs immediate medical attention.

PERMITS

Technically, permits are required by the city for ALL locations (including filming in your own home) to insure that if anything the filmmakers are doing is unsafe that they city can shut down the film shoot immediately. The only place permits are not required are when a shoot is on the lot of a registered film studio back lot or soundstage. Generally however, local authorities will not check permits unless you are filming with a large crew and a lot of vehicles in a location where you are creating “an attractive hazard” to automobile traffic flow, or pedestrians on the streets, sidewalks, or in public places where an accident could occur.

COMMON SENSE

Most of what has been said above is common sense. And if you apply common sense, anticipate possible dangers, do all possible preparation to avoid them, and hire licensed professionals when the risk factor and state law requires it, you should not get into trouble. Everyone on the set is responsible for safety. Don't let a driven director or producer push anyone to do something that is unsafe. Any member of cast or crew who anticipates a danger on the set, or sees an actual hazard should immediately report it to the Assistant Director or designated safety officer on the set.

LAST WORD

Good films can be made in a week, but there are some limits to making a film in weekend, and doing it safely. You may not be able to do everything just as the budget will limit you somewhat, so will the time limits on safety prep limit you to making films that may not have some riskier shots in them. You need to be aware of and accept these to run a safe set.

PRODUCER'S STATEMENT OF COMPLIANCE

I state that I am the registered producer on the short film our team is producing for the Renton Film Frenzy and I state that I have fully read and understand the preceding pages of “Safety and Production Guidelines” and agree to follow these guidelines to the best of my ability during the following production of our team's short film for eventual showcasing at the Renton FilmFrenzy for the safety of myself and our cast and crew during production. I understand that our team is producing our short film and not the Renton FilmFrenzy and so we are fully responsible and liable for all safety on our set.

AGREED AND ACCEPTED BY:

(signature) Producer

(printed name)

(date)

(name of short film - to be filled in later when the film is named)

Completed Renton FilmFrenzy release forms should be brought to:
Renton FilmFrenzy Information Booth at “happy delusions” store
in Downtown Renton, 924 South 3rd Street,
on Sunday, October 9, between 2 – 7 pm.