

# Safety Manual

## A Guide to Safe Conduct on Film and Video Productions

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**DODGE**  
C•O•L•L•E•G•E

*For*

*Students of*

*the Lawrence and Kristina  
Dodge College of Film and Media Arts  
at Chapman University*

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# Safety on Set

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Safety should be the first concern of every crew member involved in a film shoot. The equipment used in production can be particularly dangerous and the haste and improvisation can put individuals at even greater risk unless they are conscientious of safety at every moment. Failure to observe safety policies may result in the shut down of your production, or worse, serious injury.

## ***Preparation***

Safety begins long before the shooting day. It is the responsibility of each crew member to educate themselves about safety and to arrive on set on time, well rested, and healthy.

## ***The Assistant Director***

The AD, or Assistant Director, is the primary safety officer on the set, and this responsibility takes precedence above all the other things that the First Assistant Director does. The AD is responsible for the safe conduct of everyone involved in the production and will inform the crew about and enforce appropriate safety precautions. Any safety concerns should immediately be brought to the attention of the First Assistant Director.

The First Assistant Director has the sole authority to shut the production down if there is ever any indication, large or small, that the safety of anyone on the crew for any reason appears to be in jeopardy.

No one else on the crew, not the Director, and not the Producer, has the authority to make the decision of whether or not a situation is safe enough to shoot. The First Assistant Director is solely responsible for making that determination, and must always err on the side of caution.

## ***The Safety Meeting***

The AD's first job at the beginning of every shooting day is to conduct a safety meeting with the entire crew present. New and returning crew members must be informed on a daily basis of the safety precautions for that day's shoot, including the locations of fire extinguishers, emergency exits, and the first aid kit, as well as any special issues pertaining to that day's shooting such as stunts to be performed or particularly hazardous rigging.

### ***Proper Attire***

The AD also checks that all crew members are in proper attire. It is particularly important that footwear be sturdy sneakers or boots. Sandals or high-heeled shoes of any kind are not permissible.

The AD also checks that all crew members wear well-fitting clothing that is appropriate to the weather, thin if it is hot, layered if it is cold, and waterproof if it is wet. No clothing should have excessive fringe or any loose pieces that could possibly get caught in equipment.

Crew members are responsible for bringing alternate clothing to change into should weather conditions change unexpectedly.

### ***Working with an Equipment Truck***

Particular care must be taken working around trucks. Use at least one spotter when maneuvering a truck in close quarters.

The contents of any truck may have shifted during travel. The door or doors should be opened slowly so that nothing can tumble out onto a crew member.

There is enough power in a lift gate to cause serious injury. Operation of the gate should be performed by one crew member at a time. The crew member operating the lift gate should always yell out a warning of "going up" or "going down" to alert nearby crew members to stay back from the moving lift gate. Crew members not operating the lift gate should stay at least five feet away during operation.

### ***Moving Equipment***

Move only an amount of equipment you can handle. Avoid carrying anything that could be moved on a cart. Use extra people to move large loads and be careful moving through narrow passages.

### ***Power Distribution***

The Best Boy Electric is responsible for all power distribution from on-set lighting to extension cords for craft services.

Cables should be run together out of foot traffic areas as much as possible. When cables must cross any area where they could present a tripping hazard for the rest of the crew, they must be secured with tape, heavy carpet, or rubber matting.

When using power on location, particular care must be taken not to overload circuits. In any case, only the Gaffer, Best Boy Electric or Electrician should ever plug in any cable or light.

### ***Stands and Rigging***

The Grips are responsible for all rigging, meaning anything that needs to be hung or put on a stand. This includes the setting of light stands. When carrying a stand, the warning “points coming through” should be yelled out so crew members can move out of the way of the possible hazard. All stands in use on the set must be sand-bagged according to their load or precariousness of their position.

C-stands must be set correctly. A C-stand’s arm is designed to extend over the knuckle with the load on the side toward which the knuckle tightens. This way, if the load forces the arm to slip, it will actually tighten and stop. If the rear of the C-Stand arm extends out beyond the base, a marker should be attached to it so that it can clearly be seen.

### ***Dollies***

Grips are also responsible for the dolly. Once dolly tracks have been set, the crew must be careful not to trip on the tracks.

Heavy dollies should not be lifted, but ramped onto their tracks with wedges. Once on the track, the dolly should be prevented from rolling off the track with clamps

The Dolly Grip is the only crew member permitted to mount a dolly.

### ***Nutrition and Hydration***

Food and drinks should be available to crew members throughout the entire shoot. Craft services keeps a crew happy, but more importantly, crew members who lack energy or focus are a hazard on set.

Snacks should include fruits and vegetables as well as snack bars and candy bars. Drinks should offer both caffeinated and decaffeinated options.

### ***Working with Talent***

Particular care must be taken with talent. Actors should not be expected to be as aware of the possible hazards on a set as crew members. It is the AD’s responsibility to get the actors to the set and make them aware of any hazards.

If child actors or animals are on set, they must have a crew member assigned to watch them at all times. For Advanced Productions, a Studio Teacher must be hired anytime a child actor is on set.

### ***During the Shoot***

As shooting begins, the crew needs to stay aware of possible hazards. Any possible safety concern should be reported to the AD promptly.

Watch out for burning smells, trip hazards, clear paths to fire exits, damaged equipment, or unsafe behavior by crew members or talent.

Late arriving crew members must be briefed individually on safety by the AD.

### ***Fire, Stunts, and Firearms***

Candles and cigarettes should be handled with great care on a set. Any larger fire used on set, even a large group of candles, must be supervised by a paid Fire Marshal.

All stunts should be planned by a professional. Crew members need to be made aware of all aspects of any stunt before it is executed, and should watch for potential hazards.

If weapons of any kind, including guns, swords, and knives are to be used on a production, a weapon's permit must be secured, even if the weapons are non-functioning replicas to be used on a closed set. Blanks and squibs are not permitted.

Functioning firearms must be handled by a professional. The weapons specialist must only allow the actor whose part requires a weapon to handle the weapon during actual filming, and no one else should ever handle the weapon. When not in use, weapons should be stored in a locked location.

### ***Driving Shots***

Any shot sequences that require a camera to be in a moving vehicle must be approved by the Production Manager. The use of camera mounts and process trailers must also be approved in advance.

### ***Meal Breaks***

A meal must always be served no more than six hours after crew call. All meals should be nutritionally balanced, and enough must be provided for the entire crew and cast. Everyone should get at least half an hour to eat.

### ***Company Moves***

Should it be necessary to change locations in the middle of a shooting day, the company move must be handled carefully in spite of the temptation to rush to the next location. A safety meeting must be held at the new location before filming resumes.

Even for a short move, all equipment should be stowed securely in the production vehicles.

### ***Heat and Sun***

When shooting outdoors while it is sunny, shade must be provided if it is not available, usually in the form of an Easy-up shade canopy. Light breathable attire and sunscreen should be worn.

Proper hydration is even more critical on warm days. Always have plenty of bottled water on hand.

### ***Rain and Weather***

Should there be rain, or the threat of rain, shelter must be provided if it is not available, again, usually in the form of an Easy-up shade canopy. Raingear should be worn.

Lights must be covered by securely placing a large flag above the light, and all electrical connections should be wrapped in plastic and raised off the ground.

Should it be windy, lights and stands should receive additional sandbagging. Rope can be used to stabilize tall stands. Nothing should be set up anywhere near power lines.

### ***Working at Night***

Special care needs to be taken on night sets. Work lights should be set up when possible. Trip hazards need even more attention and all crew members should use flashlights in poorly-lit areas.

### ***Length of Shoot and Turnaround***

No shooting day should exceed twelve hours, and the AD must also make sure that there is at least twelve hours of turnaround, meaning the amount of time between one day's wrap and the next day's call time.

### ***The Wrap***

Enough time must be allowed within the twelve-hour shoot day to have an orderly wrap. The temptation to rush in order to get home must be avoided. Extra care must be taken because the crew is tired, and may be working in darkness. At night, the work light should be the last piece of equipment struck.

### ***Common Sense***

Safety is no less a concern on much larger sets or much smaller sets. Even on a two-person shoot, common sense and caution must be exercised at all times. Safety should be the first concern of every crew member involved in any film shoot.

### ***Don't Hesitate to Ask***

No matter what your position on the crew, be familiar with the College's complete safety policy as outlined above and in the Production Handbook. If you ever have a question about safety, or need to report unsafe conduct on set, do not hesitate to talk to your faculty supervisor, or the college's Production Manager, Michele Kennedy for assistance. Reports of unsafe conduct will be kept anonymous and confidential.

### ***Don't miss "Safety On Set"***

Dodge College's original production illustrating all of the above policies and more is available for check out from the Media Library. It is an engaging, visual and thorough introduction to safety procedures used on student film sets of any scale.