

Violence to workers in broadcast and filming

HSE information sheet

Entertainment Information Sheet No 2 (Revision 1)

Introduction

In this information sheet, '**must**' denotes a legal obligation. Words such as 'do', 'should' etc are used to give advice on good practice.

This information sheet is one of a series produced by the Joint Advisory Committee for Entertainment (JACE). It gives specific guidance about violence in the broadcast and film industries. People whose work brings them into direct contact with the public may face aggressive or violent behaviour. Experience has shown that this can exclude extortion, intimidation, abuse, threats and even physical attacks causing injury or even death.

The possibility of violence should be considered when planning broadcasts or filming, especially in the following areas:

- news and current affairs;
- documentaries;
- drama series shot on location;
- sports events;
- reality television shows.

The risk of violence is to be assessed and controlled in the same way as any other risk to the health and safety of those involved in broadcasting.

Hazards

Productions can encounter violence arising from many sources. These include:

- filming in a private dwelling;
- members of the public intending to steal or extort, eg protection;
- people not wishing to be recorded;
- direct or indirect assault when caught up in crowd activity, eg affray, riot etc;
- public disorder or civil disturbance;
- conflict with contractors, other productions or from within your own crew;
- hostile authorities/forces, eg arrest, kidnap etc;
- people under the influence of drugs or alcohol;

- people who may be directly targeted due to the nature of the work being undertaken, eg animal handling.

Risk assessment

The person in control of the production (normally the Producer) must assess the risk of violence and review it as necessary in light of new information and as the situation changes. This assessment will form the basis of discussions about whether to proceed with the production, what precautions need to be taken and what circumstances would cause the production to be halted. Most violent incidents can be avoided or their effects diminished with simple pre-planning and a thorough knowledge of the situation that may be encountered. This should, wherever possible, include a 'recce' of the location and, where possible, detailed research of groups and individuals.

Crews working in potentially violent environments must continually assess the situation and the effectiveness of any controls in place. Where or when these controls are found not to be effective, the crew should consider implementing additional controls or withdrawing from the situation. Any changes to the original risk assessment must be recorded or communicated to the person in control of the production.

Precautionary measures

Public disorder/civil disturbance

The following should be considered where public disorder or civil disturbance can reasonably be expected:

- consider alternative methods of gathering footage;
- wherever possible, find a high, safe vantage point. It will invariably be safer and will often allow a better view of the ongoing activity;
- the size of the team deployed and the competence of its members. Lone operators should not be placed in situations where violence is reasonably foreseeable;

- routes in and out and transportation;
- avoiding conspicuous use of filming or recording equipment;
- circumstances where it would be necessary to leave if the presence of the crew is creating, inflaming or prolonging a dangerous situation;
- advantages or disadvantages of unmarked vehicles;
- obtaining the services of a local person with knowledge of the area;
- methods of communication with the crew;
- PPE, eg head protection, safety shoes, body armour etc;
- cooperation with other broadcasters on site;
- use of security agencies, bodyguards etc;
- briefing the crew as to the likelihood and expected level of violence;
- emergency arrangements.

Provision should be made for anyone concerned about their situation with regard to violence or the threat of violence, or any other safety aspect, to be able to individually withdraw from the area if it is safe to do so. The safety of the remainder of the team must be reassessed immediately in the light of any such withdrawal.

Confrontation

When faced with the threat of violence the following approaches may be useful, depending on circumstances:

- be prepared to surrender equipment;
- try to appear calm;
- avoid prolonged eye contact;
- be aware and control the tone of your voice. Speak slowly and softly and try to avoid long sentences;
- keep a safe distance;
- don't touch anyone threatening you;
- be conscious of posture, try to appear relaxed;
- try to change the subject to distract the aggression;
- try to listen, the main problem could be poor communication;
- try to negotiate a compromise.

Weapons

If a dangerous weapon is produced unexpectedly, or if gunshots are fired or heard, the following should be considered:

- immediate withdrawal;
- the need to take cover. Be aware that car doors and many walls will not provide adequate protection from gunshots;
- the risk of returned fire if you are near people shooting;

- the danger of occupying recently vacated firing positions.

Dealing with the consequences of violence

Medical attention should be sought as necessary for any injury received as a result of physical violence.

Those that have been exposed to threatening situations or have experienced violence may require some form of counselling or in extreme cases, treatment for psychological trauma. In some cases, symptoms may not appear for some time after the exposure.

Reporting incidents of violence

Injuries (physical or psychological) arising from violence and/or 'near miss' incidents involving violence should always be reported to the employer or to the person in charge of the production.

The need to involve the police should also be considered where violent incidents have taken place.

Reports must not be suppressed because of deliberate injuries.

The Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations 1995 (RIDDOR) require that all acts of non consensual violence done to persons at work be reported to the appropriate enforcing authority where they result in:

- death;
- major injury;
- the person being incapacitated for the work they would normally be expected to do for a period more than three days.

For the latest requirements go to www.hse.gov.uk/riddor.

Further reading

Management of health and safety at work. Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999. Approved Code of Practice and guidance L21 (Second edition) HSE Books 2000 ISBN 978 0 7176 2488 1
www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/books/l21.htm

A guide to the Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations 1995 L73 (Third edition) HSE Books 2008 ISBN 978 0 7176 6290 6
www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/books/l73.htm

Violence at work: A guide for employers Leaflet INDG69(rev) HSE Books 1996 (priced packs of 10 ISBN 978 0 7176 1271 0)
www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/indg69.pdf

www.hse.gov.uk/risk

Further information

For information about health and safety, or to report inconsistencies or inaccuracies in this guidance, visit www.hse.gov.uk/. You can view HSE guidance online and order priced publications from the website. HSE priced publications are also available from bookshops

This document contains notes on good practice which are not compulsory but which you may find helpful in considering what you need to do.

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