



Best Practices for Safety Bulletin #45: Guidelines for Long or Successive Takes

Unscripted, Competition, Documentary, Process

The DGA can provide more support to Local 600 and Local 695 crews by working together in pre-production with Camera Operators, Microphone Boom Operator/First Assistant Sound persons, and the Lead Camera Assistant, as well as the Production Sound Mixer, Director of Photography, and/or Lighting Director, to ensure that heavy equipment is used safely and that long takes are executed efficiently and within budget. By including Camera Operators, Microphone Boom Operator/First Assistant Sound persons, and Lead Camera Assistants in discussions about equipment, adequate staffing, break rotations, and best practices, Producers can gain invaluable insight in their efforts to provide a safer work environment for all.

Best Practices During Pre-Production:

- Provide production with a copy of Safety Bulletin #45 and emphasize that the bulletin is a joint agreement written and agreed to by the producers, IATSE, and the participating local labor unions. Article 61 of the Basic Agreement and provisions in Local agreements affirm the agreement between producers and employees that we cannot place too great an emphasis on the need to provide safe working environments.
- Provide the Unit Production Manager and the First Assistant Director with a copy of the 2024 Local 695 MOA Microphone Boom Op Safety Memo for review and for distribution to other production personnel as needed.
- Meet with the Camera and Sound departments as early as possible to discuss the specific need for support gear, staffing, and rotation/break schedules. Coordinate with production, the Director of Photography, the Lead Operator, the Production Sound Mixer, and the Microphone Boom Operator/First Assistant Sound to get the proper support rig in the appropriate size for all Operators on the job.
 - Rigs are not one-size-fits-all and providing the wrong sized rig for the Operator can add to safety issues rather than mitigate them.
 - Support rigs and the use of sticks and/or rolling spreaders/camera pedestals (PEDs) are **not** a replacement for breaks/rotations.
- Directors should consider these safety parameters in consultation with the Director of Photography, a Lead Camera Operator, and/or the Lead Camera Assistant when deciding on the proper camera staffing to achieve the Producer's goals. Pre-plan camera coverage to stagger operating times, ensuring that at least one camera is on break.
- Directors should consider these safety parameters in consultation with the Production Sound Mixer, Microphone Boom Operator/First Assistant Sound, or Utility Sound Technician/Second Assistant Sound when deciding on the proper Sound Department staffing to achieve the Producer's goals.
- Directors should take into consideration the volume of handheld work Camera Operators/Production Sound Mixers/Microphone Boom Operator/First Assistant Sound persons will be tasked with as the style of the show is being designed. For example:
 1. Length of segments (i.e., introduction/set-up, process, walkarounds, judging, etc.)
 2. The number of successive takes to achieve the segment (i.e., number of cast members who need to be covered, talked to by hosts, judged, etc.)

3. Is handheld necessary? Can the shot be achieved with support, such as sticks, sliders, and/or rolling spreaders/camera pedestals (PEDs), shooting with 80% safety guides, and/or adding the “handheld” look during post-production? For OTFs, ITMs, and intros/judging: consider sticks with a loose head to achieve a “handheld” look.
 4. Is there any safety equipment, such as an EasyRig, Camera Vest, Fisher Boom, Exoskeleton, or XO-Boom that can be used to minimize the risk of harm to Camera Operators/Microphone Boom Operators/First Assistant Sound persons?
 5. Consider the physical terrain where production will take place. How many production moves will be necessary throughout the day? Is the shoot occurring somewhere with uneven terrain, natural elements such as mud or water, or in a location where weather presents a physical obstacle to the crew? Camera and Sound carts can weigh more than 350lbs and adequate staffing to move equipment around throughout the day must be considered. Additional Camera/Sound Utilities should be hired to help move equipment, regardless of whether they are needed to capture the setup/shot.
- Provide a Camera Truck with proper shelving and camera carts for heavy equipment:
 - Not having a proper camera truck with proper shelving to organize and place gear is detrimental to Camera Assistants’ physical well-being.
 - The use of camera carts (i.e.: Jaeger and Backstage carts) that can be loaded, and ratchet strapped in a proper camera truck will help ease physical injuries for Camera Assistants and cut down on loss and damages (L&D), which can be costly.
 - Assign a Lead Camera Assistant at the beginning of Pre-Production:
 - Like the Director of Photography, Tech Supervisor, or Lighting Director, a Lead Camera Assistant assigned to a show in pre-production will help to ensure that cameras are built/rigged in a way to maximize safety, efficiency, and comfort for the Camera Operators who will be using them.
 - Proper preparation and lead time will prevent Camera Operators from being "stuck" with a rig that isn't as ergonomic or lightweight as possible.
 - Consider a plan that will rotate Camera Operators between “handheld” shots and “sticks” shots. (e.g., scene work and interviews).
 - How many performers are being boomed in any given scene? Is it safer to hire additional Operators for the day instead of requiring a single Microphone Boom Operator/First Assistant Sound Person to capture too many subjects?
 - Ensure proper staffing so that rotations and breaks can be given at proper intervals throughout the shoot day.
 - Build rotations/breaks into the shooting schedule vs. last minute after shooting begins.

Tech Scouts

- It is important to include Lead Camera Assistants on Tech Scouts to:
 - Identify the safest camera-tech areas, the safest ways to transport gear, and potential safety hazards unique to Camera Operators and Camera Assistants.
 - Coordinate with the necessary Department Heads regarding location-specific needs for equipment transport as this is a huge safety issue on the heavy equipment side (lift gate/no lift gate, carts, proper staffing for safe and efficient lifting and moving of gear).
- The Production Sound Mixer and Microphone Boom Operator/First Assistant Sound should be invited to the Tech Scout. Their experience and expertise are highly beneficial to a production’s assessment of the challenges to safety presented by a given location or setup. If a representative from the Sound Team cannot be present on a tech scout, comprehensive photos and videos of the location should be given to the team well in advance of shooting so they can do their own analysis.

- Consult with the Lead Camera Assistant, Production Sound Mixer, and/or Microphone Boom Operator/First Assistant Sound to make sure their concerns are taken into consideration when a Tech Supervisor, Lead Camera Assistant, Production Sound Mixer, and/or are not included on the scout.

Best Practices During Production:

- Attach copies of Safety Bulletins #45 (Long Takes) and #44 (RF Exposure) to the call sheet. RF Exposure is included because exposure increases with long takes.
- Attach the Local 695 Microphone Boom Op Safety Memo to the call sheet as necessary, but especially on the first day of shooting on each episode of an episodic series.
- Enforce Safety Bulletin #45 (Long Takes) and Safety Bulletin #44 (RF Exposure).
- Check in daily with the camera/sound team for feedback and suggestions regarding rotations/breaks and support equipment. Each day may present new/different challenges such as environment, weather, gear, etc. Plans for safety should be continually reassessed and changed if necessary.
- At all-crew safety meetings, the Assistant Director should say aloud for all to hear, "Today we will be doing long takes," or "We will have rotations for the crew," just as they would announce, "We're working in extreme heat" or "There will be firearms on set," etc. This would help make it standard practice. It should be customary, and every producer should be aware.
- Address the plan for rotations and breaks in the all-crew safety meeting and camera meeting.
- Mandatory breaks. Crews who don't break or won't break are unsafe.
- Address any applicable style changes (e.g., stage/peds to handheld in the field next week, etc.) immediately with the Director of Photography, Camera Operator, and Unit Production Manager/Line Producer to ensure proper camera support equipment is available. Similarly, discuss any applicable changes (e.g., Fisher Booms, Exoskeletons, lavalier only setups) with the Production Sound Mixer, Microphone Boom Operator/First Assistant Sound, and Production Manager/Line Producer to ensure proper support equipment is available.
- Confer with Production Sound Mixer, Camera Operator, and Microphone Boom Operator/First Assistant Sound about the appropriate amount of time allowed for a continuous take before a break, contingent on the build of the camera/sound device being used and the camera support available to the Operator.