



COVID-19 Interim Recommendations for Safe Production Practices

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Introduction



We are a group of experienced Producers and Production Managers in the New York film community, presenting recommendations of what we believe are the best practices for getting our industry back up and running. These are suggestions based on common sense, consultations with industry partners, health and safety professionals, and our many years of working on film and television projects of all sizes. We do not presume to have all of the answers. We only hope this helps to guide us all down these uncharted roads.

Every production center worldwide is facing the same challenges presented by COVID-19. At the same time, each community has their own unique set of issues. In New York, we are working toward regional solutions and adapting our proposals as they evolve — knowing that first and foremost, we will be guided by science, the recommendations of the medical community, and the resources and mandates of the government.

We have been advised not to expect a zero-risk COVID-19 environment anytime in the near future. Understanding this and the fact that testing, trace scanning and serology are all in deep development, we realize there is no clear path as of today. Yet, as filmmakers, we will all surely lean on and learn from one another as we unite globally to get back to work under our “New Normal.” Our ability to homogenize our industry’s practices for resumption will be one of our greatest strengths.

New York has always been a production magnet to the world, not only for our tremendous diversity of locations and peoples, but also for the quality and breadth of our talented Directors, Writers, Actors, and Crew. The “New Normal” will be a challenge, but we are motivated to come together with the entire industry to solve these complex issues — knowing our greatest attribute is our problem-solving skills and resiliency.

New Yorkers are tough, and we are passionate about our work, our city, our state and our production community. When the time comes, know that we are ready and eager to safely get back to work on all the great films and television shows the world loves — that can only be “Made in New York.”

Health & Safety



Health & Safety considerations under COVID-19 are extensive and require additional outside experts to develop and implement necessary procedures in accordance with Studio Safety, CDC, City, State & Federal guidelines. We are consulting with medical professionals to continue to develop and refine the safe production practices.

Staffing Recommendations

QUALIFIED AND DEDICATED HEALTH & SAFETY SUPERVISOR

- Works with Production to design and implement Employer's Health & Safety Program, including requisite screening/testing and COVID-19-specific Injury and Illness Prevention Program (IIPP) and emergency response plan; coordinate protocols with production's qualified Medical Professional to oversee cleaning and sanitizing procedures — Supervisor to be assigned by Studio Safety
- Oversee Medical and Cleaning staff to implement best practices
- Oversee procurement and maintenance of proper PPE inventory and cleaning supplies and materials
- Develop and facilitate adaptations to workplace for touch-less access to doors, drinking fountains, and hand wash stations

QUALIFIED MEDICAL STAFF

- Administer screening methods and/or testing as available and as may be required or recommended in accordance with Studio Safety, CDC, City, State and Federal guidelines
- Data management resulting from any screening, testing and tracing

INDUSTRIAL CLEANING DEPARTMENT SUPERVISOR

- Coordinate and oversee cleaning and sanitizing activities in all production areas
- Supervise Quarantine Equipment Manager (as needed)

Film and TV Production



General Recommendations

HEALTH & SAFETY PRE-PRODUCTION MEETING AND TRAINING PRIOR TO START OF EMPLOYMENT

- Provide education and training utilizing COVID-19 protocols developed specific to our industry and region

REGULAR SCREENING AND TESTING AS AVAILABLE

- In accordance with Studio Safety best practices and CDC, City, State and Federal guidelines

PPE FOR ALL CAST AND CREW

- Provide masks, gloves, face shields, hand sanitizer, as appropriate

PRACTICE FREQUENT HAND-WASHING/SANITIZING AND PHYSICAL DISTANCING

- 6 feet between workers as general guideline — provide mobile wash/sanitizing stations

MANAGE/STAGGER PERSONNEL TO ACHIEVE SAFE WORKER DENSITY

- Work with Studio Safety, CDC, City, State and Federal guidance to maintain safe work environment

ENHANCED EQUIPMENT CLEANING AND VENDOR QUARANTINE PROTOCOLS

- Utilize quarantine storage lockups for incoming and outgoing equipment and materials

CONSIDER SUSTAINABILITY & ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT

- Whenever possible implement environmentally responsible practices throughout the production e.g. sourcing of materials, paperless systems, enhanced waste management systems, reusable/recyclable where possible

ENHANCED SECURITY

- Enhance security at every prepping, shooting, worksite to avoid cross contamination; all pre-approved visitors must receive COVID-19 training

MENTAL HEALTH SUPPORT

- Provide resources to support mental health, i.e., New York State Electronic Help Center (844) 863-9314

COVID-19 HEALTH & SAFETY HOTLINE

- Assuming that employees will vigilantly observe the required 'close contact' protocols, it is imperative that we create a confidential Covid Health & Safety Hotline, outside the studio's HR hotlines, where employees can confidentially voice their concerns and have those concerns addressed immediately as they may affect the welfare of the entire production.

Creative Solutions



Health & Safety considerations under COVID-19 are extensive and it will be crucial to allow ample time from script delivery to production. It is essential that the studio/production company work hand in hand with producers, showrunners, writers and directors to ensure the adherence to these creative guidelines.

Writers / Scripts

- Writers work remotely for as long as possible
- Scripts adhere to the practice of Studio Safety, CDC, City, State and Federal guidelines
- Minimize number of characters to tell the story
- Minimize dependency on background actors
- Overall number of sets and locations per script will need to be reduced (eliminates company moves and reliance on moving cast / crew)
- Increase stage work for more control and less exposure to public spaces and reduce number of sets that are location dependent
- If location work is unavoidable, determine which are viable as recurring / swing sets and how many can be accommodated per script
- Block filming (consolidating sets / stages / actors)

Script COVID-19 Review Process

- Utilize time during shut down to write, rewrite, revise
- Allow additional time to address any new standards mandated by SAG, DGA, and other unions / guilds as they relate to the script
- Put all current scripts through COVID-19 review to ensure readiness upon restart of production
- TV / Features: ALL scripts 2–4 weeks prior to start of prep for internal / external COVID-19 review

Creative Solutions



Cast & Series Regulars

- Script action and direction for cast must be considered and adapted to adhere Studio Safety, CDC, City, State and Federal guidelines
- Cast should review and address safety concerns prior to principal photography
- Casting via remote taping
- Prioritize local cast to reduce travel and cross contamination
- Casting should be production schedule driven
- Supporting Cast, Guest Stars, and Day Players booked exclusively per project (reduces exposure to multiple set environments)
- Cast movement should be limited between trailers / base camp / set
- Book core Background Actors and Stand-Ins on weekly contracts
- Require Background Actors to report HMU / Wardrobe ready when possible

Directors

- COVID-19 education and training needs to be part of the Director's prep
- Increased non-consecutive prep for script COVID-19 review
- Prioritize local directors when possible
- Implement block filming — Director films minimum of 2 episodes

Remote Work

Expand and Facilitate Remote Work Operations

- Meetings, scouting, casting via secure digital platforms
- Increase use of digital accounting and production software
- Post-Production to follow proper content security protocols
 - Accounting
 - Art Dept
 - Casting
 - Editing
 - Health & Safety /
Medic (early prep)
 - Locations
 - Post-Production
 - Producers, Writers,
Directors
 - Production
 - Transportation
 - VFX

Production Office

Work with Health & Safety Supervisor to:

- Reconfigure office to minimize cross-contamination and practice physical distancing
- Develop cleaning and craft service procedures
- Limit in-office personnel to essential staff only — identify number per department, based on work space available and Health & Safety Supervisor density guidelines
- Stagger shifts to rotate staff as needed to minimize office density
- Meetings via secure digital platforms
- Accounting to increase use of digital software for time cards, PO's, Pcards, petty cash, check requests, invoice approval, check signing, etc.

Location Filming



Scouting / Creative Adjustments

- Work with Writers, Directors, DP, and Production Designer to assess filming locations for Health & Safety / COVID-19 review
- Allow additional time for scouting, clearing, and prep of locations
- Increase use of virtual / video scouting including reliance on existing databases
- Include Health & Safety Supervisor in preliminary scouting process
- Maximize filming on stages / existing sets / “back lot” environments
- Target locations that can be exclusively controlled by Production (i.e., office floor, entire house, vacant businesses and facilities, etc.)
- Reduce number of locations, company moves, and maximize “multi-purpose” locations
- Target exterior locations that provide ample space for physical distancing mandates
- Municipal permits for exterior filming might be limited due to physical distancing mandates
- Temporarily increase properties eligible as qualifying stage spaces provided no qualified stage in the area is available

Prep / Advance Work

- Enhanced documentation for location owners to provide assurances re: sanitization procedures and crew health
- Work with Health & Safety Supervisor to develop and implement necessary cleaning procedures to maintain robust sanitation protocol
- Minimize footprint and prep / wrap time on location by adjusting design alterations and rigging work
- Manage / stagger crew sizes and schedules, in accordance with Health & Safety Program and guidelines
- Stagger departmental prep and wrap crew schedules to reduce worker density

Location Filming

Technical Surveys

- Eliminate “large group” Tech Scouts
- Utilize remote photos and video scouting wherever possible
- Director Scouts: consolidate scouts with limited crew;
Follow up with Department Tech Scouts in small groups
- Director available by video chat during Department Tech Scouts
- Adjust lunch protocols to allow for proper physical distancing at meals
- Utilize additional vehicles to reduce passenger density

Shop Work

Construction / Costumes / Picture Cars / Props / Scenic / Set Decoration / Special Effects

Work with Health & Safety Supervisor to:

- Identify acceptable number for each work space / department, based on space available and Health & Safety Program and guidelines
- Stagger shifts and work weeks to minimize work space density
- Enhance PPE for crew
- Increase use of individual tools and materials
- Add shop space and create boundaries to allow for improved physical distancing where possible
- Install supplemental wash stations
- Regular and mid-day cleaning of work spaces
- Add prep time allowance for new Health & Safety protocols and schedule structures
- Allow additional time for slower acquisition and fabrication processes
- Implement vendor sanitation / quarantine protocols
- Extend rental period allowing for quarantine and cleaning processes

Filming: “On Set”

PHYSICAL DISTANCING — Maintain 6 feet between workers as a general guideline

PPE & CLEANING / SANITATION SUPPLIES — Available for all Cast and Crew

HAND WASHING / SANITIZING STATIONS — Readily available

OPERATE SET IN “CLOSED SET” STYLE — Limit to essential crew only; No visitors

LIMIT NUMBER OF BACKGROUND PERFORMERS — Reduce to safe densities, in accordance with Health & Safety Program and guidelines

RETHINK VIDEO VILLAGE — Reduce by utilizing secure digital technology for individual viewing

ENHANCED SAFETY BRIEFINGS AND BULLETINS — Updated daily safety communications specific to the day’s work including attachments to call sheet outlining safety protocols

DAILY SAFETY MEETING — To include reinforcement by the Health & Safety Supervisor

ALLOW ADDITIONAL TIME — For enhanced Health & Safety measures, i.e., physical distancing, cleaning and sanitizing protocols, and transportation complexities

Schedule and Filming Hours



Health and safety considerations under COVID-19 are extensive and will require additional time and impact each work day and overall schedule

10-HOUR FILMING DAY

Begins at General Crew Call / Ends at Camera Wrap

- This does not include the additional unidentified time that it will take to appropriately administer Health & Safety procedures at the beginning of each day
 - Administer screening, testing and tracing protocols as may be required or recommended in accordance with Studio Safety, CDC, City, State and Federal guidelines
 - PPE disbursement
 - Equipment sanitizing before and after filming
- Pre-calls and wrap times independent of General Crew Call and Camera Wrap times as needed
- Utilize rig / de-rig crews for load-in, setup and wrap duties, and equipment sanitizing
- Stagger times for crew meal breaks, when possible, allow groups of people to break for a meal while company continues to operate or consider filming 10 continuous hours as a situation allows
 - Production may not be able to procure an appropriate space to allow for physical distancing and traditional meal breaks may not be possible
 - Extend catering serving period

OVERALL CAST AND CREW HEALTH

It is widely accepted that the amount of rest an individual receives affects the health of one's immune system. The 10-hour filming day will allow time each day to implement the enhanced Health & Safety guidelines while also providing cast and crew with a reasonable turnaround period to rest, assess personal health, and monitor for symptoms.

Hair & Makeup / Costumes / Props

 *The following departments, in addition to cast, will not be able to maintain physical distancing at all times and will require enhanced PPE (i.e., face shields, etc.)*

H/MU

- Additional time to clean / quarantine kits before filming
- Personalized kits for each actor to minimize contamination per Health & Safety
- Single-use applicators

COSTUMES

- Allow additional time to procure and properly sanitize costumes
- Allow additional space for fittings, separate from other work areas
- “Individual Use” laundry bags for each actor

PROPS

- Cleaning / sanitizing per guidelines
- Clean cast personal props prior to and after each use, minimal handling
- Add prep time to allow for slower acquisition / fabrication processes

Transportation



Public transportation is a vital component of living and working in New York City. Many cast and crew use public transportation on a daily basis to commute to work.

Work with Health & Safety Supervisor to:

- Establish updated transit protocols including more localized pickup points within five boroughs, ventilation practices, and allowance for physical distancing mandates
- Reduce number of passengers in vans and utilize larger vehicles to adhere to physical distancing mandates
- Establish maximum occupancy per vehicle to allow physical distancing
- Health & Safety and PPE protocols will be required for all drivers, helpers, and passengers
- Vehicles must always have PPE and cleaning supplies available
- All vehicles to be sanitized periodically throughout the day consistent with Health & Safety Program and guidelines

Travel – Distant Hires

 *New York is still under a “Stay at Home” order which includes travel restrictions. Protocols are evolving. It is critical to follow all national and international government, state, local and CDC updates.*

- The CDC recommends avoiding all nonessential travel
- If personnel must travel within the USA, state and local travel restrictions currently in place must be strictly followed.
- If personnel must travel internationally or outside their local area, in accordance with current recommendations, all will be required to quarantine for 14 days upon arrival.
- Minimize travel to the extent possible. When travel is necessary, attempt to minimize frequent back-and-forth travel.
- Consider long-term apartment rentals for cast and crew, rather than hotel rooms, to reduce interactions with the general public
- Special considerations for high-risk travelers will be required

Post Production

** Health & Safety considerations under COVID-19 are extensive and it will be crucial to allow remote work and additional time for the post schedule, i.e., dailies turnaround and notes processes.*

Remote Edit / Color / Sound

- Content Security: VPN pipeline OR encrypted drives with lockbox utilizing production-provided edit systems
- Edit staff working remotely will rely heavily on upload and download speeds, so it may be necessary to offer home internet upgrade
- Where possible, offer in-home color reviews to DPs, Directors, or Showrunners; utilize secure transfer or streaming sites to share media and review via color-calibrated tech (iPad Pro or calibrated monitors)
- Sound editorial and mix review as remote as possible
- If Director or Showrunners are comfortable with at-home mix reviews with approved headphones, utilize secure transfer or streaming sites to share media

Post Facility

- Work with Health and Safety supervisor to set up protocol for accessing the building and facilities
- Eliminate the use of common spaces and minimize craft service
- Limit number of people in edit and review rooms
- Edit suites must accommodate physical distancing
- Rooms to be thoroughly cleaned between sessions
- If in-theater reviews are necessary, consider individual review sessions with written notes. If individual review sessions are not feasible, separate all attendees per physical distancing mandates (minimum 6-foot distance) and limit to key personnel only; Connect all others via digital video platform
- Work with productions to establish a safe dailies drop off and workflow
- Work with sound vendors to enact safe loop group / ADR protocols with only essential personnel in attendance

Catering & Craft Service

 *Health & Safety considerations under COVID-19 are extensive and require modifications to food service.*

Work with Health & Safety Supervisor to:

REVAMP CATERING PROCESSES AND CRAFT SERVICE

- Individually packaged meals and snacks, no buffet style, implement advance ordering system

ENHANCE HEALTH & SAFETY PROTOCOLS & PPE FOR SERVERS

- Catering & craft services crews will require additional health & sanitation training

NO LARGE GROUP SEATING

- Adherence to physical distancing mandates and space limitations in New York will make seating for cast and crew meals challenging

STAGGER MEAL BREAKS

- Coordinate adjusted break schedule in consideration of space constraints and physical distancing mandates and/or consider working “continuous hours”

HAND WASHING / SANITIZING STATIONS

- In all food service areas

Vendor Protocol

 *Prioritize sourcing and fabricating locally to support New York's businesses and economy.*

Work with Health & Safety Supervisor to:

- Develop appropriate Cleaning and Quarantine Protocols for vendor pickup and deliveries
- Establish Quarantine Equipment Manager to supervise equipment movement and status and enforce protocols at the quarantine lockups
- Establish Quarantine storage lockups for incoming and outgoing gear (need for and length of quarantine time TBD based on latest Health & Safety guidelines)
- Require vendors to adhere to cleaning, screening, testing and tracing protocols as may be recommended in accordance with Studio Safety, CDC, City, State and Federal guidelines; Protocols remain in effect for smaller / specialty vendors (including crew gear)
- Work with Stage and Shop facility owners to ensure compliance with cleaning and sanitizing procedures
- Equipment, rentals and purchases go through Quarantine Protocol prior to handling by crew; Day-of requests may not be feasible

Emergency Management Planning

 *Given the concerns that will arise in the event of an outbreak, protocols are evolving and research is ongoing. This requires interface with a separate group of Risk Management and Strategic Planning Experts in addition to local government agencies.*

- All protocols will make use of all the most currently available screening and testing methods and technologies
- Provided education and training will include a “Test-Positive Action Plan”

Key Recommendations:

- Advise employees to self-monitor, providing necessary guidance through Health and Safety Advisors
- Prompt identification and isolation of symptomatic individuals is critical
- Employers will implement the following:
 - ▶ Take steps to limit spread of the respiratory secretions of any symptomatic individual; Further details outlined in CDC and OSHA guidelines (linked on Resources page)
 - ▶ Establish temporary isolation areas at all facilities where individual examinations can be conducted by the Health and Safety Staff
 - ▶ Design “Return to Work” protocols that adhere to the most current guidelines from health authorities
- Plan and implement a confidential contact tracing protocol in accordance with NYC Department of Health, state and federal guidelines

Emergency Management Planning



Given the concerns that will arise in the event of an outbreak, protocols are evolving and research is ongoing. This requires interface with a separate group of Risk Management and Strategic Planning Experts in addition to local government agencies.

In the event of symptoms or a positive test:

- Symptomatic individuals should undergo further examination with their primary care provider
- A positive test for any staff, crew or cast member will result in a structured action plan which includes: separation from the rest of the production, secure transportation off-site for the individual, contact tracing within the production and additional cleaning / disinfecting protocols
 - ▶ Implement a confidential company-wide “Medical Update” communication system to entire company in the event of an infected individual

In the event of recurring regional or nationwide shut down:

- A large scale strategic action plan will be implemented in conjunction with Risk Management and all Governing Bodies, to include:
 - ▶ Notification regarding shutdown via existing company-wide communication system
 - ▶ Transportation of Non-Local Employees
 - ▶ Implement agreed-upon protocols for the return (or holding) of vendor equipment
 - ▶ Secure and quarantine all stage and production facilities
 - ▶ Base “Resumption of Work” protocols on current Health & Safety guidelines and Governing Bodies

Resources



- **CDC:** <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/index.html>
- **WHO:** <https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019>
- **OSHA:** <https://www.osha.gov/Publications/OSHA3990.pdf>
- **NYS Dept. of Health:** <https://coronavirus.health.ny.gov/home>
- **Gov. Cuomo:** <https://www.governor.ny.gov/>
- **DGA MOA 2020** (“Safety Responsibilities” Exhibit 2 - Page 42):
<https://www.dga.org/-/media/9C5DE8FBE3794FF1920F23EAB9B4B1A1.pdf>

Please email questions or comments to
New York Producers Covid Response Alliance
at nypcovidresponse@gmail.com