



David P. White
National Executive Director

Hassan Adan, Regional Manager
Cal/OSHA
750 Royal Oaks Drive, Suite 104
Monrovia, CA 91016

May 25, 2016

RE: Creating vocal safety standards in video game recording sessions

Dear Mr. Hassan Adan,

We are writing to you on behalf of Screen Actors Guild-American Federation of Television and Radio Artists regarding an ongoing safety issue for voiceover actors who do unsafe, vocally stressful recording sessions in video games. Based on the concerns of some of our 160,000 members, which include actors and voiceover performers, we are requesting a thorough investigation of industry practices.

Over the years, as the video game industry has incorporated more dialogue into its titles, voiceover actors are being asked to perform vocal sounds that go way beyond a safe pitch zone. Increasing numbers of voiceover actors are reporting that they are experiencing both short-term and/or long-term damage to their vocal cords, due to the intensity of the vocal demands put on to them by the employers. For up to four hours, actors are asked to perform not just voices, but noises, death screams, creature voices, combat yelling and other sounds, with so much force and explosive vibration, that they are causing internal damage to their vocal cords.

Warren Line Jr., MD, Otolaryngologist, and Linda Dominguez-Gasson, MCD, CCC-SLP speech-language pathologist, who interface with actors who experience vocal stress, have documented that the vocal stress from video games is causing medical problems that include vocal nodules, cysts, polyps and, in some cases, cord hemorrhaging. Medical treatments may require short-to-long-term rest, medications, surgery, and speech-language therapy to remediate the injury. Long-term effects can lead to career-ending alteration of vocal quality or vocal cord paralysis.

The speech-language pathologists at Nancy Sedat & Associates say it is possible that just one session that is too vocally demanding could cause damage to an actor's vocal cords, possibly enough to need surgery and/or voice therapy.



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That strain is preventable, as employers often know the vocal content and the extent of the vocal stress prior to a session. Still, they often deny this information to the actor. Members have also reported that employers will continue to push actors in a vocally stressful session, even though there are audible signs of vocal distress. In fact, we have had reports from members that some employers are offering special numbing candies so that the actors can power through the session without feeling the damage they are doing to their vocal chords.

Moreover, actors say they are not being given time in a session to warm up their voices, so actors, on their own time, will warm up before a vocal session to ensure that their voice is properly warmed up. If actors know that a session will be potentially vocally stressful, actors will try to schedule the session on a Friday so that they will have the weekend to rest their vocal cords.

Actors have limited ways of protecting themselves on the job independently. Our members fear retaliation for letting employers know if a session is becoming too vocally stressful. As actors are freelance employees, and are rarely signed to a contract for any single game, the performers can be let go if the employer feels unsatisfied with a session.

Employers are failing to meet their requirements to evaluate the workplace for hazards, correct hazards, and educate their employees on how to prevent unsafe workplace conditions for voiceover actors, pursuant to Title 8, Section 3203. We recommend that vocally stressful sessions be reduced in duration without a loss in compensation.

At your earliest convenience, we request a meeting with you to explain in more detail how vocal stress is putting actors' health and livelihoods at risk.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "David P. White". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name being the most prominent.

David P. White