

The Safe Way Forward: The Basics

As the industry makes slow progress to reopening, SAG-AFTRA members will be entering into a very different filming environment due to COVID-19.

Our goal is to keep cast and crew healthy by setting up protocols that create the environment for the lowest risk possible to safety and health. The world we live in changes daily, as new medical and scientific information about the virus emerges—and, so, we must move forward but in a way that is careful and wise.

We must also recognize that we are in a fluid situation and so protocols are currently evolving as we learn each day the best way forward. We will continuously update our position as necessary for the benefit and protection of our members.

Here, we provide a current comprehensive list of key issues and answers as a guide for each member who is considering a production job. The details below are largely shaped by “The Safe Way Forward”, a comprehensive roadmap jointly drafted and agreed-to by SAG-AFTRA, DGA, IATSE and the Teamsters. The document is built on the broad medical, scientific and policy standards set forth by political officials and key government experts (e.g., the CDC), coupled with input from highly-trained experts recruited to structure a safe workplace within our industry’s unique environment.

We are also laying out protocols for performers working outside a studio set, especially in voiceover jobs. In addition, we are negotiating other key specific issues with industry.

These issues and answers will be frequently updated as circumstances develop and to reflect evolving rules, protocols, and practices.

General Principles

There is no such thing as “no risk” in the absence of an effective vaccine which reaches a large percentage of the population, and eventually creates broad immunity and “starves” the virus for lack of vulnerable people to infect.

But, we feel we can create a “low risk” environment based on three important principles:

- Testing, Testing, Testing;
- Restructuring sets with a “Zone system” to achieve the maximum physical distancing and safe working environments;
- Broad use of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)

Testing is the key to a safe environment. The modeling data is clear: regular and frequent testing of cast and crew effectively and substantially reduces the risk of infections and transmission. Testing gives strong confidence that if someone is infected, s/he can be isolated and quarantined and any further transmission can be avoided.

A Zone system. By creating “bubbles,” or circles of interaction, fewer people will be in close proximity to each other. This will mirror the best medical advice we are used to hearing in our daily lives: we create a safer environment by limiting the size of crowds in confined spaces.

PPE at all times. Within the production environment, the use of PPE (especially masks and face shields) will be constant, widespread and broadly available, fortifying a relentless program of sanitization of every nook and cranny.

Specific Questions and Answers

Pre-Production

What is the policy regarding waivers?

Performers should not sign any waiver of liability or assumption of risk related to COVID-19. When the union becomes aware of these, we notify production that they cannot require these types of documents as a condition of employment without first bargaining such form with the union. It is the union’s position that unless negotiated with us, these forms are ineffective anyway. We have had this discussion with many productions resulting in elimination or substantial modification of such documents.

If you are aware of any projects that are requiring these forms of performers, please let us know right away.

Will the protocols change the casting process?

Yes. Our framework recommends:

1. All first auditions should be virtual unless there is a specific reason why a virtual audition would not suffice.
2. Second “live” auditions be scheduled at spaced intervals to accommodate physical distancing, with a waiting place for actors to congregate where physical distancing can apply and, if appropriate, an option to wait in cars and be called.
3. Actors receive scripts/rundowns/schedules digitally, with provisions made for confidentiality, i.e., digitally signed confidentiality agreements.
4. Actors check in via an app from outside the casting area and are called via a text when it’s their time.
5. If an in-person group audition is required, actors should have a partition placed in between them, or at a minimum wear clear face shields, all of which to be provided by the producer.

Should performers be put on contract starting on the test date?

The performer would only be obligated to the producer on days between testing and commencement of services if the producer is paying for a hold/quarantine day. However, you are

correct that there is a possibility of infection between the time of testing and the shoot day, which is why repeat testing is required.

Our experts have advised that the virus generally becomes contagious within 72 hours after infection. This timeline is what guides the repeat testing protocols.

What is the policy if I test positive at the studio prior to the job?

This is part of the ongoing discussions to clarify SAG-AFTRA's position on this matter which will be communicated as it progresses.

What is the payment for the time I spend getting tested?

Time spent in testing on a work day should be treated as work time and part of the continuous work day.

Time spent in testing on a day when the performer is not otherwise already paid for the day should be compensated. The rate of compensation is still under discussion.

What is the policy for testing locations and who covers the cost?

The producer is obligated to cover the cost of testing. As such, the union cannot dictate the location of testing. We are hopeful that the production companies will work with performers with respect to scheduling testing subject to the performer's professional availability. However, there are realities of the safety protocols that may make this difficult, such as the requirement that testing occur 24 hours prior to work.

What is the payment for travel and quarantine?

The existing travel rules of the contract remain in place for travel days. If travel and quarantine is required by the Producer, the union's current position is that the performer should be compensated for it; however, this is part of the ongoing discussions to clarify SAG-AFTRA's position on this matter which will be communicated as it progresses.

If I get the job, what am I going to need to think about in terms of travel to the production location?

If you must travel by plane or other inter-city transport, you should take all precautions of social distancing and sanitization—for example, wear a mask at all times while in public, wipe down surfaces as much as feasible (such as plane seats and tray tables) and maintain six feet separation with other travelers.

Before traveling by plane, you must be tested and cleared 24 hours before the flight—this ensures that any person who is carrying the virus but might be asymptomatic does not board a flight, and, then, introduce the virus to the production area once on the ground.

Production

What is the Zone System that is being recommended?

There will be three Zones: Zone A, Zone B and Zone C.

Zone A is any perimeter within which activity occurs without physical distancing or the use of PPE. This is the Zone with the most *potential* for transmission because some activity will take place in which PPE is removed. The number of people in Zone A will be severely limited.

If you are cleared for Zone A, you will likely be tested three times a week at a minimum; when circumstances require—such as extensive intimate scenes or scenes involving extreme physical exertion—testing may be daily.

Zone B is everywhere the production has a footprint that is not Zone A. Use of PPE and stringent physical distancing practices are observed and enforced within Zone B.

Zone C: is the outside world cast and crew go to when not working—their **homes, hotels, or other public places.** Everything we do in Zone C has the potential to effect Zone A and B. So, while everyone gets tested prior to entering Zone A or B for the first time and, then, on a regular basis, the production set has a higher chance of remaining a safe place if cast and crew remain vigilant and practice social distancing and high-level sanitization while in the off-set Zone C.

The Zone system will force everyone to ask a fundamental question: what Zone do I absolutely need to be in to do my job and why am I standing in a specific area if I am not needed there? Any protocol, security zone or checkpoint can only work seamlessly if every individual does a self-check and adheres to each guidelines.

Each day, cast and crew arrive at a medical checkpoint. Each person's temperature is taken.

No one will be allowed access to Zone A or Zone B for the first time unless they have been tested and cleared in accordance with the Zone A testing protocol—people may carry the virus and show no symptoms so it's crucial to aggressively test from the outset to isolate any carriers of the virus.

Regular testing will vary from daily to three times-a-week to weekly, depending on where your role requires you to be. For example, what if you are cleared to Zone B—and you are being tested weekly—but need access to Zone A? **You cannot enter Zone A until you are tested and cleared in accordance with the Zone A testing protocol.**

Will testing frequency be decided by other factors in addition to the Zone system?

Yes. Our assumption takes into account the outside efforts by public health officials to contain the infection rate and transmission rate of COVID-19. Testing protocols may be adjusted by mutual agreement of the producer and the unions if circumstances warrant, for example, in areas of low prevalence of COVID-19.

Will Personal Protection Equipment be available at the set location?

The production must provide face masks, and in some cases face shields, to be made available at

the set's medical checkpoint at the start of each day.

What is the best way to get to the set so a performer adheres to all protocols?

If possible, drive yourself and park in the Crew Lot, which be secured from the public, attendants or owners of the lot. Whenever possible, avoid public transportation which creates the possibility of being infected.

If you park in a production lot (CREW), you are immediately entering into an area considered Zone B which will have a medical checkpoint.

Once you take company transportation—either from the production lot or from any other location (such as a hotel, or, if you are picked up from home) you are considered to be in Zone B and you must observe social distancing.

Is check in time at the studio (for medical clearance, document signing etc) considered work time?

Yes, your work day starts at the time you are directed to report.

How will the safety standards be reinforced to everyone?

There will be a health safety meeting. At the meeting, the 1st Assistant Director and Health Safety Supervisor will brief cast and crew, emphasizing the protocols and making sure each individual completes a declaration about any symptoms they might be experiencing and/or any possible exposure to symptoms consistent with COVID-19.

Who will make sure the protocols in “The Safe Way Forward” are adhered to?

The Health Safety Team, led by a Health Safety Supervisor. Their broad assignments include:

- Make sure all the testing procedures are followed rigorously;
- Make sure the set is fully stocked with PPE, all areas are sanitized and safe (including assessing ventilation, air filtration and circulation, and the disinfecting of surfaces, property, equipment and tools);
- Make sure hand washing, sanitizing and disinfecting stations are set up and fully functional, as well as ensure hand sanitizer is broadly available—all of which will be carried out by a dedicated Hygiene Crew.
- Make sure all checkpoints are in force;

The Health Safety Supervisor is the final authority on any COVID-19 matters and has the power to halt production in the case of a breach in procedures or testing results that raise concerns about virus infections or spread. Stunt coordinators should immediately report any concerns directly to the Health Safety Supervisor.

Where will performers congregate during shooting?

Performers wait their turn in an area that is sanitized and separated from the crew. Background performers have their own holding areas, which, for small scenes, will be as close as possible to the set—and provide adequate bathrooms, and hand sanitizing stations.

You will notice much less foot traffic around a set—production crew, especially the 1st AD, will set up scenes and do in-between adjustments—such as moving walls or furniture—by staggering on-set presence of department personnel to minimize the number of people and, thus, maintain social distancing.

What is the policy for quarantine payment if a show shuts down because of a positive test?

This is part of the ongoing discussions to clarify SAG-AFTRA's position on this matter which will be communicated as it progresses.

What happens if I test positive during the production?

You will be directed to immediately self-quarantine for two weeks—while, at the same time, a second test will be run to confirm the diagnosis of the first positive result. If the tests contradict each other, a third test will be performed. These procedures may be modified to comply with government or health authority requirements.

How will meals times take place? Many productions are reporting they will not break but rather deliver meals to be eaten when possible? What is the payment for French Hours?

This is part of the ongoing discussions to clarify SAG-AFTRA's position on this matter which will be communicated as it progresses.

However, there will no longer be open catering. All food provided by production will come in pre-packaged, take-away containers. Lunch times will be lengthened and staggered to ensure that social distancing—either when standing in line or finding an open space to consume food—is consistently enforced by making it doable.

Will we have rehearsals?

If needed, rehearsals will be done if possible, so performers can wear PPE, and practice robust social distancing of 6 feet if possible. If possible, a rehearsal will take place the night before, after the day's regular schedule, to run through scenes with the fewest people on set.

What is being done to protect the private health information of members?

Medical records are confidential and the production should be treating them as such. Temperature check results should not be publicly announced. If this is not true on any set, please let the union know right away so that we can address it with the producer.

Are we sharing trailers?

No, neither trailers nor dressing rooms should be shared at this time, until further notice.

What safety protocols will be in place during hair and makeup?

The same philosophy will be enforced for a safe space work in the hair and makeup areas: Restrict and control the number of people who have access to hair and make-up trailers and workspaces and ensure proper physical distancing and ventilation.

Each time a performer has been in the chair, strict cleaning procedures will take place for the work areas and bathrooms, leaving adequate time to disinfect and re-set the area by wiping down frequently affected areas such as doorknobs, sinks and counters— and those procedures will take place before, during and at the end of a production day.

Here are some additional specifics you will see in the hair and makeup areas:

- Special attention will be given to maximizing ventilation in hair and makeup workspaces;
- Full PPE must be worn by hair and makeup artists at all times while in proximity to performers (e.g., masks and face shields, gloves as appropriate).
- Limit the amount of time when PPE is not worn by actors to the bare minimum. Hair and makeup should be planned to minimize the amount of time an actor is required to remove PPE. For example, a performer may be able to wear a mask while having their eyes or hair done, and only need to remove the performer's mask when the relevant areas are worked on. Once made up, a performer may consider employing a face shield, as opposed to a mask, so that completed make-up is not disturbed. Handheld face shields must be provided to performers for use during the time they are unable to use other types of PPE.
- As is true at all times throughout the production cycle, everyone in the hair and makeup area will perform CDC-recommended guidelines for hand washing before and after working on each individual's hair or make-up;
- Each professional tool (e.g., brushes, applicators) will be assigned to one actor and not used for anyone else. Disposable tools will be utilized whenever possible. After each use, non- disposable hairbrushes, combs and make-up brushes will be cleaned with appropriate disinfecting solutions.
- All supplies should be kept in individual cast bags;
- A disposable palette for each individual should be used to mix foundation, powders, lipstick, or other compounds;
- Kits will need to include multiples for most make-up;
- No food or drink should be present at the make-up and hair stations, except for personal water bottles that should be handled only by the individual.

- Hair and make-up departments shall have COVID-19 specific Health and Safety training with particular attention to working with performers who are not wearing PPE;

What safety protocols will protect me when it comes to costume and wardrobe?

The same philosophy will be enforced for a safe space work in the costume and wardrobe: Restrict and control the number of people who have access to the costume and wardrobe work areas. Advance planning will be employed to avoid overcrowding in costume and wardrobe areas.

In addition:

- Crew will exercise the same rigorous sanitation protocols employed throughout the production, cleaning hands before and after handling any costumes, accessories, and other items;
- PPE will be worn for duration of person-to-person contact.
- In-depth planning will be done ahead for shopping and pulling needed items from rental houses. Delays at rental houses, retail stores, and in shipping items should be anticipated;
- Booking cast as early as possible and get sizes as early as possible to avoid unneeded traffic in the area;
- Only the costume department personnel will touch wardrobe items until those items are provided to the performer;
- Each performer will have her/his costumes and outfits bagged separately for safety;
- All items will be properly disinfected with CDC-approved chemical, solutions or methods before they are provided to the performer and after use;
- Props will be given special attention upon arrival and touched up with disinfectant wipes and other methods (see “Props” info below);
- Performers will have a separate, private area to receive a costume or item, and maintain appropriate physical distancing from other performers and costume staff;
- Fitting photos should be taken by one person, not multiple people touching the same phone, tablet, or other electronic device;
- Any items needing special cleaning requirements should be done using the customary process before its given to the performer. Based on the scientific data to-date, steam/hot washing items is sufficient to disinfect wardrobe and other costume items, while jewelry should be disinfected using materials that will not cause damage;
- When dealing with items likely to be degraded by steam/hot washing, production could utilize quarantines of at least seven hours in “hot boxes” as an acceptable disinfectant-level alternative.
- Stunt body pads should be purchased by production for each performer’s individual use (coordinator can advise on brands, etc.) instead of being provided by the stunt coordinator or other stunt performers.

How will the safety protocols govern the handling of props?

Similar to other areas of the production, access to props will be severely restricted. Props crew must exercise the same rigorous sanitation protocols employed throughout the production,

cleaning hands before and after handling any costumes, accessories, props and other items.

In addition:

- Props “show-and-tell” should be done virtually with photos or, when required, at a dedicated table separate from the main props storage area;
- Only members of the props departments will touch items until it is clear what an actor will need;
- Set pieces, props and surfaces performers are working on, or with, will be sanitized before and after use;
- Food and beverage props items intended for use on set should be prepared in multiple identical set ups to minimize the need for anyone to touch food set ups after placement. All food safety protocols for COVID-19 prevention must also be followed;
- All props must be kept secure in storage and on set;
- Stunt mats should be disinfected before and after different users, per manufacturer protocols;
- The personal effects of performers should remain with the performer at all times, except when personal necessity items on set are maintained in an individually designated safe area.

How will stunt performers be protected?

It is the producer’s responsibility to provide a safe work environment; however, this does not prohibit a producer from seeking the stunt coordinator’s input in creating the protocols for a production.

Production is required to provide SAG-AFTRA with written protocols that comply with “The Safe Way Forward.” These protocols are specific to the production – especially as it relates to the types of scenes, locations, hazardous conditions and mitigation stunt performers are likely to encounter.

Are stunts required to have their own personal wardrobe/props/pads? Who provides these items (specifically stunt pads)?

There will be no sharing of pads from one performer to another. If the performer has their own pads, they are encouraged to bring their own; however, if they do not have the pads applicable to the gag being performed, the stunt coordinator should advise the Producer and the pads purchased and provided to the performer at no cost. The performer should clean the pads that they place next to their person according to the manufacturer’s specifications (usually soap & water).

What is the cleaning requirement for stunt mats and pads? Steering wheels/cars? Who cleans them?

All equipment related to stunts (e.g. vests, mats, pads) have specific methodologies for cleaning between every use by a different performer and at the end of the day for overnight storage. The cleaning procedures must be according to the manufacturer's specifications and any additional measures required by production safety for the protections of performers.

The producer is responsible for providing a safe set, including cleaning of equipment; however, it may vary set to set as to who actually does the cleaning. If your equipment is damaged as a result of the producer cleaning it, the union would take the position that the producer should pay for repair or replacement.

How will voiceover performers be protected?

Although voiceover work does not occur on a film set, the same principles apply in a studio:

- Widespread use of personal protection equipment. When any member is doing studio work, masks must be made available.
- Strict physical distancing will be a constant, largely accomplished by reducing the overall number of people working in the audio house or studio and strictly controlling who enters the VO booth. This change tracks with the best advice we are given in our daily lives to “bend the curve” of the pandemic and keep a distance from people as much as possible.
- Constant sanitation and cleaning of every nook and cranny, every device, and every tool—before, during and after work.
- Appropriate ventilation and/or air filtration to assure that air in enclosed spaces and booths does not become a source of infection
- A dedicated safety team whose sole task is to ensure the protocols are implemented and adhered to at every moment by production executives

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