

Sound Branch OB Coronavirus working practices

The aim of this document is to provide guidance for safe working practices specifically within the Sound Department in relation to limiting the spread of Covid-19 and continuing work under government restrictions and distancing measures

Background assumptions

These guidelines make certain assumptions as to how the Outside Broadcast facility providers will approach the various production requirements. It does not consider the possibility that operators may be working remotely which would require separate mitigations and guidance. It is acknowledged that Production and Facility providers will often be in accordance with the venue's management and safety teams.

These guidelines are in addition to any Government policies and industry guidelines. It is probable that Government guidance and medical advice will change as the infection rate moderates or in the event of further outbreaks.

Refer to Public Health England website.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/coronavirus-covid-19-list-of-guidance>

The following issues are covered -

- Working locations
- Long hours in confined spaces
- Rigging, derigging and testing equipment.
- Working with onscreen presenters and contributors
- Pressure of live broadcast and dealing with technical failures
- Sharing radios and communications equipment

Working Locations

There are two elements to working on an OB, working inside the scanner and working outside. The Sound Supervisor and Sound Guarantee usually work in the Sound Control which is separate from other areas within the truck.

- Each person should work in a separate environment as per Government guidelines. Extra rig days should be provided to allow the Sound Guarantee to fully prepare, rig and program equipment before the Sound Supervisor arrives.

For Sound crew working outside this can combine a number locations, from loading and unloading equipment from supply vehicles within the Broadcast Compound to working in open space, e.g, pitchside, to commentary boxes, interview rooms and enclosed studio and presentation spaces. This normally requires working and rigging at the same time as other departments including as cameras, sparks and production.

- Thorough pre-planning and scheduling of rigging times including staggered rig days and times will be required to enable departments to work separately and safely.

Long Hours in Confined Spaces

For those working inside the truck.

- Providing engineers and operators separate spaces.
- Make sure that there is a good airflow and that the air is constantly refreshed.

For those outside the truck, especially Sound Assistants.

- Studio, reporter and commentary staff to stay close to but not directly within the space.
- Consider conducting Interviews outside.

Rigging and Derigging

Equipment transported and stored on tenders presents difficulties as crews from different departments will need to collect and return the equipment in the same confined space. The extra processes put in place are very likely to require extra rig and derigging time, long hours and tiredness impair judgement and are thought to reduce the immune system's ability to fight infection and so should be considered a risk factor.

- Equipment to be sanitised before arrival.
- Where possible, equipment for different departments to be transported on separate vehicles.
- Use of staggered pre-scheduled rig and derig times and days.
- Extra days to allow safe rig and derig times and minimise the chance of cross infection.
- Facs checks to be staggered by department.
- Sound Assistants to be issued with sufficient supplies of disposable gloves, anti-viral wipes and hand wash for use throughout the work period.
- Equipment must only be moved or operated by the person who rigged it. Under no circumstances should any equipment from another department be placed on top of a different departments rig.

On-Screen Presenters, Commentators and Contributors

For the Sound Department this will require extra precautions for testing mics and earpieces and placing them on the onscreen talent.

- Where practicable hard wired mics and iems to be used in onsite studios.
- All mic packs and headphones should be sanitised with anti-viral medical grade wipes before use and after testing.
- Body pack transmitters and receivers should be placed in disposable bags by the talent who will also be responsible for removing and disposing of the bags.
- Changing batteries on mic and iem body pack packs to be done by the talent.

- Commentators and onscreen talent to be issued with their own dedicated headphones, earpieces and microphones which must not be shared.
- For the duration of the Covid-19 restrictions, onscreen talent responsible for mounting their own mics and earpieces and for sanitising their earpieces. Whenever possible time should be allowed for Sound Assistants to demonstrate to contributors using a dedicated mic how the mic should be mounted, whilst maintaining a safe distance.
- Any generic earpieces should be considered as single use disposable items.

Planning for Technical Failure.

All usual backups and contingencies to be planned for and rigged. Pre-planning between the Unit Manager, Heads of Department and the Director should establish if there are any equipment failures they regard as tolerable, if restoring them falls outside of health and safety guidelines or is not practicable without breaking these guidelines.

- Plan for failure and provide guidance on safe workflows.

Sharing Radio and Comms Panels

- Headphones, earpieces to be tested, sanitised and packed in sealed bags before arrival. Once opened they should not be shared.
- Dedicated comms panels that should not be shared between different users.
- All users responsible for disinfecting their own comms equipment during use and at end of shift.