

Safe Filming Practices for Screen Talent

Covid-19 safety advisory developed by Janice Koh & Tan Kheng Hua
in consultation with the Screen Talent community and endorsed by
the Singapore Association of Motion Picture Professionals (SAMPP)

SAFE FILMING PRACTICES FOR SCREEN TALENT DURING COVID-19 PANDEMIC

I. INTRODUCTION

1. When the Covid Circuit Breaker was lifted on 2 June 2020, film, television and media productions were permitted to resume work under Phase 1 of re-opening.
2. The Singapore Association of Motion Picture Professionals (SAMPP) approached actors Tan Kheng Hua and Janice Koh to moderate a townhall for screen talents in Singapore to discuss their expectations around safety protocols on set.
3. A set of draft recommendations were put together by a small working group for discussion at the townhall. These recommendations were drawn from various sources, including SAMPP's document, "Comprehensive Safety Measures for the Resumption of Content Production", and guidelines issued in countries where filming has re-started.
4. The 3-hour virtual townhall, held via Zoom on Monday 1st June 2020, was attended by about 250 screen talents as well as production personnel and casting agents from the media industry. It included nine facilitated breakout discussions, and a plenary session to address key concerns. Detailed notes from the townhall can be made available.
5. The proposed recommendations below have taken into consideration the feedback and inputs from the screen talent community, and are submitted for the Infocomm Media Development Authority's (IMDA) endorsement and industry-wide adoption.

II. GUIDING PRINCIPLES

6. The recommended guidelines for safe filming practices for screen talent recognise that productions differ from one to another. The implementation of safety protocols will therefore depend on the risk assessment of each project. For the purpose of risk assessment, projects may be viewed as:
 - a. Low Touch (eg single host news or info-tainment programme);
 - b. Medium Touch (eg less than 8 cast with no touching);
 - c. High Touch (eg scenes with intimacy, fights, crowds) - NOT IN PHASE ONE
7. The higher the risk, the more strict and comprehensive the safety protocols need to be. **However, as safe-distancing measures are mandatory under Phase One, High Touch projects should not be carried out during this period.**

III. RECOMMENDED GUIDELINES TO PROTECT SCREEN TALENT (A TO Z)

8. The following safety measures have been established bearing in mind the wellbeing of both cast and crew. They should be carried out with a sense of care and responsibility, not only on the part of the producers, but also by every member of production.

Pre-Production:

- a. Casting and meetings for pre-production matters should be carried out remotely, as far as possible. If this is not possible, mandatory safe distancing guidelines must apply.
- b. Where possible, the use of paper should be minimised. Contracts, call sheets, and scripts should be transmitted electronically. If paper copies are distributed, sharing should not be encouraged.
- c. All personnel on location must sign health and travel declaration forms as part of their contract, and once again at the start of filming.
- d. Locked scripts should be available at the earliest possible stage of production to allow sufficient time for early planning. Detailed information on script reads, rehearsals, fittings and shoot requirements should be distributed to screen talents before contracts are signed, so that they know what is expected of them as early as possible.
- e. Sufficient time should be provided for new work flows and for safety protocols to be carried out properly when it comes to scheduling.
- f. Producers must provide a clear set of safety protocols to be adopted during filming. This should be disseminated to all departments, together with a quarantine management plan in the event of suspected or confirmed Covid cases on set.
- g. The practice of providing production insurance for all screen talents before the start of work should continue, even if specific cover for Covid-19-related incidents is not yet available.
- h. Producers should consider amending scripts to cater for mandatory safe-distancing measures, especially under Phase 1. Scenes involving large groups of people, or which involve close physical contact between actors (Eg. scenes of intimacy, fight scenes) should be avoided, in line with public health guidelines.
- i. Where it is available, pre-testing for Covid-19 is recommended for key actors, and those who come into close contact with them (Eg. key extras and key crew members such as sound, wardrobe and make-up personnel). This may be more critical in cases where close physical contact is needed. For tests to be relevant, it is essential that actors adhere to quarantine rules during the filming period.
- j. Production houses should hire a trained Safety Management Officer to ensure the compliance of safety and disinfection protocols on set, especially on larger scale

productions. The Safety Management Officer should be independent and autonomous, and should be specially trained in health and safety precautions.

During Production

On-site management

- k. Secure the location during filming so that unauthorised personnel are not allowed on set or location.
- l. Restrict and control the number of entrances and exits on all sets/locations. Authorised personnel must enter and exit using Safe Entry App, and have temperatures taken. Cast and crew arrival should also be staggered to avoid crowding.
- m. Mandatory use of Trace Together App for all personnel on set for contact tracing.
- n. Adequate space for physical distancing is essential. A separate space, with chairs spaced more than 1m apart, should be provided for key talents. Similarly, extras should have their own holding area, away from other production personnel. Strict physical distancing should be adhered to in all holding areas.

Personal Protection, Disinfection and Temperature-taking

- o. Temperature-taking with a contactless thermometer before start of shoot day and at regular intervals during the shoot day should be carried out for all personnel on location.
- p. All personnel on location must wear a mask at all times. The only exception is during meal-times, and for talents who need to remove their masks for filming.
- q. The production company must ensure the ready availability of personal protective equipment and alcohol-based disinfection products for the entire production team throughout the shoot (Eg. hand sanitisers, alcoholic wipes, Ziploc bags, surgical masks and face shields, protective gloves). Disposable masks and gloves that have been used are considered hazardous waste and must be disposed of properly.
- r. The production company should ensure the regular disinfection of sets, workspaces, make-up and catering stations, and production vehicles. This includes shared appliances such as cooler boxes, refrigerators, coffee machines, and water dispensers.
- s. Hand hygiene is critical in infection prevention. Regular breaks must be scheduled into the shoot day for hand-washing, sanitizing, and disinfection. Production houses should ensure accessibility to clean hand-washing facilities. Where this is not possible, hand-sanitising products must be provided for all cast and crew.

Make-up & Wardrobe

- t. Make-up artists (MUA) should have a separate set of make-up for each actor. If this is not possible, make-up should be safely decanted onto a clean mixing palette, and disposable applicators should be used. All make-up and hair tools and wigs must be disinfected between use. Actors are encouraged to bring their own make-up tools. Where possible, extras should arrive with make-up done, and bring their own personal make-up. MUA should always wear protective masks.
- u. Wardrobe department must have procedures for cleaning and sanitising costumes and accessories. Each actor's wardrobe should be kept separate from others to prevent cross-contamination. Hangers, irons, clothes racks should also be regularly disinfected. All make-up, hair and wardrobe personnel should wash or sanitise hands in between each fitting or actor.

Props

- v. All props must be disinfected before and after use. If eating utensils are being used in a scene, they should be properly cleaned and sanitised after each use.

Sound

- w. Assign one mic pack and personal mic strap to each actor for each day. Where possible, regular cast should have their own designated mic packs and straps. All equipment should be disinfected daily. When mic-ing cast, sound personnel should wear a mask and full-face shield, as cast would not have any protection whilst filming.

Catering

- x. Meals should be individually packaged, with its own individual set of disposable utensils. No buffets. There should be staggered mealtimes, and social distancing rules must apply when on meal break. Talents are encouraged to bring their own personal reusable utensils. Eg. utensils, water bottles, mugs.

Transport to locations

- y. To minimise risk, production companies should consider private transport options for all key actors, in particular those who are not easily replaceable. If vehicles are used to transport talent between locations, safe distancing rules must apply inside the vehicle, and the vehicle must be disinfected after each journey.

Protecting Minors

- z. Minors may have difficulties adhering to safe-distancing measures. When working with child talents, the child should be accompanied by someone from the same household. A separate holding area, away from other cast and crew, should be provided for them.

IV. ADDITIONAL RECOMMENDATIONS TO IMDA

9. In this time of caution, every effort should be made to provide a safe working environment for screen talents and media workers in Singapore. However, some of the above guidelines require the support and assistance of IMDA to be effectively implemented.
10. We therefore respectfully propose the following for IMDA's consideration:

IMDA Helpline

- a. We **STRONGLY** recommend that IMDA maintain a helpline to advise on situations where safety measures are in question. Cast and crew who feel that reasonable measures are not being taken to mitigate their risk of exposure should be allowed to raise these incidents with a regulating authority.

Additional Financial Support

- b. Adopting safety protocols will require additional time, manpower and space. As our industry starts to introduce new work flows, we hope production houses can be supported with additional financial resources, at least in the initial stages, to cope with the burdens of keeping our workplaces safe. This includes hiring Safety Management Officers or additional staff to enforce safety measures, renting larger spaces to accommodate safe-distancing, providing talents with personal-use equipment and tools, and introducing paid leave policies that will allow cast and crew to stay at home if they are not feeling well.

Endorsement of Safety Guidelines

- c. We seek IMDA's endorsement of the above guidelines to ensure the safety of Singapore's screen talents on set. Most screen talents in Singapore are freelance workers, who are not under the protection of any union or association. This endorsement will encourage industry-wide adoption and practice of essential protocols to keep them safe, and ensure the smooth re-opening of our film, television and media sector.

Drafted by:
Janice Koh and Tan Kheng Hua, in consultation with the Screen Talent community

Endorsed by:
Singapore Association of Motion Picture Professionals (SAMPP)

For Mandatory Safety Rules for the Resumption of Content Production in Singapore, please visit :

<https://www.imda.gov.sg/for-industry/sectors/Media/Film/Filming-in-Singapore>

<https://www.sampp.org.sg/covidsafetyprotocols/>

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