

Louisiana releases return-to-work safety guidelines for film production

Caitie Burkes | August 3, 2020



As motion picture productions prepare to resume filming in Louisiana after a months-long pause, LED today released a set of safety guidelines for the statewide restart.

LED's 62-page document, [available here](#), represents a range of best practices recommended by state government and several industry groups. The white paper comes at a time when additional production activity is expected to ramp up throughout August and September.

Among recommendations are that productions filming anywhere in Louisiana designate a COVID-19 compliance officer, require face coverings for everyone except performers, limit access to production areas and encourage the use of digital assets, such as scripts and call sheets, when possible. Productions are also urged to follow familiar protocols, including social distancing, frequent hand-washing, temperature checks and active monitoring of personnel for potential exposure and any signs of illness.

Before the pandemic, Louisiana had 15 shows in production across the state, says Trey Burvant, president of the Louisiana Film and Entertainment Association, in a prepared statement.

"As these productions start to come back safely online, we look to be busier than ever when we return," Burvant says, noting his organization

has been working for months with studios, vendors and crews to develop the safest return-to-work plan.

In another prepared statement, Chris Stelly, LED's executive director of entertainment and digital media, says that as pandemic-related issues appear to place a greater emphasis on domestic production opportunities, the nearly five-month production pause and continued growth of streaming services are "increasing the demand for quality content"—a demand which he says Louisiana is well-equipped to handle.

It's a sentiment echoed by Katie Pryor, executive director of the Baton Rouge Film Commission, who says the city has been generating increased interest as a film location since the pandemic began, declining to disclose specific projects.

"Other markets haven't reopened yet, and here we have a lot of stage space," Pryor tells *Daily Report*. "Everyone has been in a planning phase, and these state guidelines are another way to tell everyone how open for business we are."

Overall, Louisiana's "best practices" plan incorporates two recent industry safety reports—one from the Alliance of Motion Picture and Television Producers, and another, called *The Safe Way Forward*, issued jointly by the Directors Guild of America, the International Alliance of Theatrical Stage Employees, the Teamsters and the Screen Actors Guild-American Federation of Television and Radio Artists.

Other recommendations include:

- Provide testing for anyone working on the production;
- Make additional medical supplies and PPE available;
- File permit applications, if applicable, and any requests to the local governing jurisdiction as soon as possible;
- File a safety plan with the local entity providing the permits, even when it's not required.

Last year, Louisiana Entertainment certified \$538.5 million in state spending from film production activity, along with \$167.5 million in Louisiana resident payroll. Since the start of the state's entertainment incentive program in 2002, the film industry has generated more than \$7 billion in film production activity. ■

[Read the full set of guidelines.](#)