

California State University
Northridge

Department of Cinema and Television Arts

STUDENT'S GUIDE TO OBTAINING PERMITS AND
INSURANCE FOR FILM AND TELEVISION
PRODUCTIONS SHOT OFF CAMPUS

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The Beginning

All those skills that you've been acquiring here at CSUN are ready to go into play as you begin shooting your project off campus.

As you are aware, you need to protect yourself as you go out there. Your project becomes an entity- a being if you will which requires care and maintenance. Included in your planning should be making sure that you have permission to shoot and have covered any liabilities that you may incur. Doing "guerrilla" shooting is dangerous at best, as you will not have the support of the University behind you in case ill fortune strikes.

After you seek your professor's approval, the first thing you will need is to obtain insurance for your project. This insurance is designed to protect you and the University from any liabilities.

Following that, you will need permission to take your equipment off campus. That permission is granted in two ways. First, you will need permission from the city, county, state, or U.S. Government to shoot in their area. Who controls that depends upon the specific area you are using. If you are shooting on the streets of Los Angeles, you will need permission from Los Angeles City. If you are using one of the county parks as your site, you will need permission from the Los Angeles County. If you are using a state historical site, you will need California State permission and finally, if you are shooting in a national park, you must obtain permission from the National Park Service. This is for your protection- they want to know you are there. **It is also the law!** Filming anywhere in the Southern California region without a permit, even the smallest student production, is a misdemeanor crime. Student filmmakers can and have been arrested.

Having that permission in writing, you will need specific location permission. If you are shooting at City Walk, which is a part of Universal Studios, you will need permission from Universal Studios. In short, you will have to have two pieces of permission.

The following are the guidelines for obtaining the necessary information for all of these.

Insurance

You must have financial protection for your venture in case something goes wrong, such as one of your cast being injured, or in case the property you are using gets damaged. It's akin to your auto insurance- you hope you never need it, but in case you do you'd better have it. That is why California insists that you have insurance on your auto or have a bond posted. Somebody has to be responsible. And so, the location of your shoot may require you to show proof of insurance.

Here, the school will help you out. CSUN has a Risk Management Office just for this purpose. But, time is of the utmost importance.

You should call the location (not the city, county, or U.S.Bureau) you will be using and ask them what is the amount of insurance you will need to obtain in order to shoot in their location. That figure will be needed before you begin dealing with the University.

Michael Bryant, Equipment Room Manager, will deal with the Risk Management Office for you. You will need to get your request in to him at least two weeks prior to your shoot. If you can plan further ahead and make those requests as soon as possible, you will be far ahead, as you will see in just a moment.

You should be aware that while this insurance exists, even for your equipment rentals, it might not cover certain aspects of your venture. There is a deductible amount, which you will be responsible for if things go wrong. The insurance is designed to help you in the event total disaster strikes. Also, this insurance is not designed to cover your costs in the event a project gets canceled. For example, you have rented a camera to shoot outdoors and a rainstorm cancels the shoot. Your cost of rental is not covered.

You will find in the equipment room the necessary forms for requesting insurance for your production.

****Note** We do NOT provide Worker's Compensation insurance for you, your crew, or your actors. You SHOULD procure this relatively inexpensive coverage on your own through the State Compensation Insurance Fund. Their phone number is 323-266-5000. If you are using actors that are members of the Screen Actor's Guild it is mandatory to have this coverage.**

Insurance Checklist

- o I have obtained all insurance forms needed for my shoot.
- o I have filed those insurance forms with Michael Bryant.
- o I have received back the completed insurance certifications.

Permits

If you are going to be doing your production off the premises of Cal State Northridge, you will need to have permission from the locale to do so. This permission is handled by the city your location is in by issuing a permit to shoot. This permit gives you city permission, not necessarily the permission of the location.

Step one is to obtain a permit. **FilmL.A., Inc.** (1201 W. 5th Street, Suite T-800, Los Angeles, CA 90017, Phone: 213-977-8600) issues permits for all locations in the City of Los Angeles, unincorporated areas of Los Angeles County, the City of Diamond Bar, the City of Southgate, the Angeles National Forest, and the Los Angeles Unified School District. They can be helpful for securing permits for the State of California and the federal government and can guide you to the right offices for other Southern California municipalities. Remember- there are many cities in the Los Angeles County area. If you are shooting in those cities, you will have to go through their City Clerk's Office.

The California Film Commission (Phone: 323-860-2960) can also give you guidance for other cities and counties across California.

It is possible that you may need a permit for each location, although in some cases a city may "blanket" your permit as long as you spell out the days required for your shoot. Cities, counties, the state, and the federal government always require to be named "additionally insured" on CSUN's General Liability and Property Damage Liability policies.

Remember, have your professor sign a CSUN student film project certification. The fees for these permits are usually waived for official student productions. But additional services like street posting, interrupting traffic flow, etc. carry substantial fees.

Also remember that being a student means little to bureaucracy! Be aware that if you change the dates of your shoot, you will need to notify the issuer of your permit as well as Michael Bryant.

Permit Checklist

- o I have obtained the necessary permit forms.
- o I have filed the necessary permit forms with the proper authorities.
- o I have received back the completed permits.

Location Permission

Your film permit says that the city your location is in grants you permission to take your equipment there. However, you will need permission from the location itself.

What does this imply? Let us say, for example, that you wish to take your cameras, crew, and actors to the Los Angeles Zoo. You need to obtain a permit from the city but you also will have to obtain and receive permission from the Los Angeles Zoo Association. They may have special requirements, such as insisting that they assign personnel to your crew to act as a liaison, insuring that the animals are not injured. You may have to pay these people to take care of you!

Another example might be shooting in Travel Town in Griffith Park. A Griffith Park Ranger may be needed to unlock the gate for you as you wish to shoot before the crowds show up. You will have to pay him an hourly wage.

You may want to do your shoot at City Walk. You will still need a city permit to shoot, but you will also need permission from Universal Studios to use their facilities.

You may be shooting inside Ralph's Market. Again, both a city permit and permission from Ralph's will be necessary.

You will need to call each location's manager and obtain permission. In all probability, they will want to see your permit and will ask for an insurance certificate naming them "additionally insured". At this point, you will need to present them with copies of both the permit and insurance. How you handle this permission is up to you. You must get something in writing if possible!

Location Permission Checklist

- o I have obtained all necessary permission for my shoot.
- o I have the completed permits.
- o I have the "additionally insured" insurance certifications.
- o I have s CSUN student film project certification.

Overview

Your professor and Michael Bryant will help you where they can, and are willing to do so provided that you give them the time and opportunity to. In most cases, they will be able to give you the advice you need. It is suggested that you touch base with them after reading this to make sure that all of the things you must do are clear.

If your group is organized and have done all the preplanning necessary for a healthy production, shooting off campus should not present any problems. The various cities and locations welcome you. It is a good marketing move for them to be seen, and twice as good business to be affiliated with a CSUN production.

All they want is to know what and when you are doing something, and to know that you have taken care of the financial responsibilities for your production.

Generally speaking, this is part of the reason why production managers in film and unit managers in television get paid well. It is to insure the smooth interface between the production company and the location of the shoot.

The "Big Kids" (as we refer to them, sometimes) go through this very same process of pulling permits, insurance, and permission. The major difference is that in your case, the cost hopefully is minimal. In the case of a production company, the costs can be quite substantial.

Count your blessings...

Be Respectful And Good luck!

FORMS

The following forms can be found in the CTVA equipment room:

Insurance Request Form

Certification and Location Release Form

Informed Consent Hold Harmless Agreement Form