

THE SPJ MMJ SAFETY GUIDELINES

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Our SPJ MMJ safety guidelines are aimed at helping television news managers create safe working conditions for solo television reporters, also known as MMJs. We recommend news managers share these guidelines with staff in newsrooms around the country. This list was compiled by the SPJ MMJ Safety Task Force, which includes experienced television journalists.



1. No solo live shots if the MMJ does not feel comfortable.

- Safety is a priority, and MMJs should not feel in danger.
- Newsroom management needs to trust the MMJ on safety concerns.
- No solo live shots at night, unless the MMJ feels it can be done safely.

2. Remember the 3 P's

- Stations should care about their people and property over profits.

3. Safety Check System

- When an MMJ is out in the field, a quick safety check is necessary, and this can also involve the producer and director helping out. Just like when they do audio checks.

4. Extreme Weather

- Trust the meteorologist. If they are telling viewers not to be in the area, an MMJ does not have to be there.
- Use look lives as an option.
- Let the MMJ make the call on this assignment.

5. Door Knocking

- Do not send an MMJ to knock on a door alone, mainly when covering a crime story.
- Give the MMJ the option to make the call on this assignment.
- If it is a must, have a buddy system where the MMJ goes with another worker.

6. Everyone needs to feel a personal responsibility

- Everyone on the news team should be looking out for the MMJ.
- While producers are planning their show, making sure the MMJ is in a safe place on breaking news should be a priority.
- News management should check in on MMJs to see how they are doing emotionally, especially during a mass shooting or natural disaster.

7. Identify a go-to person for safety concerns in the newsroom

- An MMJ needs an ally in the newsroom who can relay concerns to management when the MMJ does not feel comfortable doing it themselves.

8. Safety barriers

- Ensure that the MMJ has safety barriers on assignment when they are near traffic, crowds, or anything of safety concerns.
- This check should be part of the process before they go live. Sometimes the MMJ can get tunnel vision and the extra eyes and ears back in the newsroom helps.

9. Mentors Matter

- Newsroom leaders, including management, should create a mentoring program where new or younger MMJs are partnered with experienced veteran MMJs or photojournalists.
- Mentors can teach about safety and help MMJs learn how to work to improve the job, including speaking up on issues.

10. Keep talking about safety on the job

- Newsroom management should ensure the news team knows there are safety guidelines for MMJ, which should be followed.
- Bi-yearly, bring in veteran MMJs or photojournalists who are safety experts to talk to your team.
- Conduct quarterly meetings with MMJs to discuss any concerns or advice to make the job safer for them.
- Keep talking and have an action plan.

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