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MO8 Roads & Transport Policing Command

Metropolitan Police Film Unit

A Guide to Film Set Theft

Version 1.5



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Introduction

The purpose of this document is to provide crime prevention advice, suggestions and guidance to production companies and crew filming on location within London.

Film sets by their very nature will have expensive items and equipment on site, ranging from cameras and camera related accessories, generators, props, and confidential information.

Equipment and items are often stolen from crew and tech vehicles, exterior areas of locations, and buildings or outbuildings being used to store equipment.

The following list highlights scenarios whereby items have been stolen;

- Unattended and unsecure items
- Forced entry to buildings and outbuildings where equipment has been stored
- Forced entry to secured vehicles left unattended
- Distracting security by an accomplice whilst another removes items from open vehicles and easily accessible locations
- Posing as crew, or having been dispatched from studios to collect generators and other items
- Snatching equipment from the floor and the hands of crew
- Forced entry to occupied premises

The following information is to provide considerations, and give best practice guidance for productions who are on location whilst working within the commercial filming environment.

Signs and Letter Drops



Careful consideration should be given to the placement and use of film signs, and the MPS Film Unit would advise that the production reviews its use of visible signage and decide if it is the only option. The concern is the advertisement of the location, which may entice individuals with an ulterior motive.

Consideration should be given to utilise modern day technology to provide more discreet directions.

Letter drops must be carried out prior to filming under agreements, providing clear and concise information. Therefore, careful consideration should be given regarding the information contained within the letter drops, particularly how much information is relayed and its relevance. This will be reviewed by the Film Office for compliance.

In the event the location has been targeted recently, providing the Film Office are aware, near future productions will be advised on previous incidents to allow re-assessment of security plans and equipment storage.

Personnel



The MPS Film Unit would advise the following protocols should be adopted whilst on location to ensure operations whilst on location;

- All crew to be in possession of personal or work ID
- All crew to have a visible pass on display at all times (Coloured wristband, lanyard etc.)
- In the event filming covers more than one day at the same location, consider alternating the colour of the band
- Maintain vigilance whilst on location. Challenge anyone who is not recognised, not displaying ID, or is not wearing any form of identifier (wristband, lanyard etc.)
- Verify stories via your own contact numbers, not ones provided to you from visitors. Contact the studio, Security Company, Producers, or 1st AD if in doubt

Remember WIPE!

- **W**ork ID
- **I**dentify
- **P**rudence
- **E**ngage

Utilising the above will assist production crews in being able to identify intruders.

Visits to Set



Sometimes additional crew will visit sets to either collect or provide additional equipment needed. All visits should be clearly planned and documented on the call sheet, and those responsible for the location should be made aware of any impending visits, including Locations Teams, 1st AD, and Security.

In the event an unannounced visit take place, security and crew should seek to verify the purpose of the visit. In the event verification cannot be satisfied security and crew should have the confidence to decline visits, and refuse the collection of any equipment and refuse entry.

In the event visits are scheduled or have been verified, visitors should be escorted at all times by onsite security.

Visitors should be required to sign in, ID verified, and sign out upon leaving.

A full record of all equipment being collected, its destination, and contact details for the collection party should be retained.

Consideration should be given to check in with the collection party to ensure all equipment has been recovered and accounted for.

Remember CAST!

- ***Challenge visitors***
- ***Ask for ID***
- ***Satisfactory verification***
- ***Transfer and record***

Equipment



All equipment should be visible to all crew, and not left unattended.

Items stored in buildings and outbuildings should be locked away, and ideally only one person should be the designated person, with granted access and in possession of keys on the day.

High value equipment should be recorded on an inventory, complete with any serial numbers.

High value equipment, and any other equipment of value should be property marked.

Careful consideration should be given to the amount of equipment on location and whether it is all required for that particular shoot.

In the event a large amount of equipment *must* be on location, productions should consider the option to seek an internal and secure location to store the items.

Other options are the consideration to utilise visual recording and other monitoring equipment (CCTV), particularly when equipment is left stored away overnight (refer to your security company for further guidance).

Police Response



Currently, a theft from a motor vehicle will be classified as such, regardless of whether it is a high value camera from the back of a tech van on a film set, or someone's lower value stereo from their own personal car. Therefore, the investigation process will be the same, and will be under responsibility of the same investigative departments. We encourage all thefts from film sets, no matter how minor or low value to be reported to police as soon as possible, via 101 or online reporting ([link](#)). It is important to gather as much accurate information to ensure concise monitoring.

We do not have analytical tools to separate theft reports from filming locations, so we would encourage you to also inform the MPS Film Unit. **This will not replace the need to report to local police in the first instance.**

Key information that will support police investigations;

- Accurate dates
- Accurate times
- Full location details
- Full description of all items taken, including value and serial numbers
- Any property marking, and if so what
- Full description of any suspects, vehicles and direction of travel
- Accurate recording of any vehicles used, and their registration numbers
- Any knowledge of CCTV overlooking the film set
- As many witnesses as possible
- Victims and witnesses willing to provide statements, attend court and give evidence if required
- Images of items reported stolen
- Images or videos of suspects and vehicles

Remember FILM!

Familiarisation

- Knowledge of the location
- Recognise areas of weakness
- Awareness of any historic theft incidents

Identify

- Personnel
- Suspicious behaviour

Lock it down

- Secure equipment, props and personal belongings
- Consider lockable rooms, cases, and access points

Manage movement

- Control over access and exit points
- ID for personnel and vehicles
- Visitors are verified and escorted

Consultation and References

Constable Dan Elliott
Constable Eleanor Carmichael
Sergeant Ed Barber

Metropolitan Police Service Film Unit
<https://www.met.police.uk/advice/advice-and-information/f/af/filming/>

Mail: filmunit@met.police.uk | Mobile 07780 338 569 (Dan Elliott)
Mobile 07770 177 655 (Eleanor Carmichael)

Reporting:
<https://www.met.police.uk/ro/report/ocr/af/how-to-report-a-crime/>

Other references:
[National Police Chief's Council Construction Site Security Guide](#)

	INCIDENT AIDE MEMOIRE (I.A.M.) <i>(Attach to call sheet)</i>
PROJECT:	
LOCATION (FULL ADDRESS INC POSTCODE:	
DATE:	FROM.....TO.....
TIME:	
WHAT HAPPENED:	Male/Female: Ethnicity: Age: Height: Headgear: Top clothing: Bottom Clothing: Footwear: Anything said: Items/tools/weapons used: Anything unique or memorable:

	INCIDENT AIDE MEMOIRE (I.A.M.) <i>(Attach to call sheet)</i>
DESCRIPTION:	Colour: Make: Model: Registration: Direction of travel from scene:
VEHICLE:	Name: Address: D.O.B.: (E): (T):
INFORMANT (YOU):	Name: Address: D.O.B.: (E): (T):
WITNESS 1:	Name: Address: D.O.B.: (E): (T):
WITNESS 2:	Name: Address: D.O.B.: (E): (T):

	INCIDENT AIDE MEMOIRE (I.A.M.) <i>(Attach to call sheet)</i>
CCTV:	Yes/No If Yes, Where?
ITEMS TAKEN:	Item type: Make: Model: Description: Value: Property Marked: Y/N Yes/No
POLICE REF & OFFICERS DETAILS:	
NOTES:	

Please send to filmunit@met.police.uk