

Taking Care of Your Crew and Location

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When working on hardwood or tile floors, often layout board (cardboard) is used to protect areas that will not be seen in frame but which will have heavy foot traffic. Also, layout board or pieces of carpeting is often cut to be placed under stands to protect the floors from scratching.

Crutch tips are also commonly used on the feet of stands to help protect flooring. The plastic feet of c-stands are not soft enough to prevent scratching.

When setting a c-stand in a position which leaves the arm at or near eye level, a tennis ball with a slit cut into it can be placed on the end of the arm. This serves as both a visible warning that there is something in your path, and it also helps prevent the end of the arm from damaging anyone's eye in the event of a collision.

It is important for every member of the crew to actively keep the set safe and organized. It is also important that crew members only move and stage equipment for which they are responsible or under the direct supervision of one who is. When a stranger moves your gear, items get lost or damaged. This can slow down production as well as cost real dollars to the production.

You must all be concerned with each others' well being, and that of your location. Remember at each location you are emissaries for the next crew to shoot there and you have an obligation to the larger film making community to maintain our relationships with those not directly involved in our industry.

Beginning your shoot day

Once you have arrived at your location you will need to prepare for the day. The best approach is to gather the "keys" (AD, DP, Gaffer, Key Grip, Production Designer, Sound Mixer, etc.) and walk through the days work, in shooting order. If time, space and other limitations prevent this, the director should at least walk through the days work with the 1st AD and DP. (The AD will disseminate the requisite information to the numerous department heads.) The director and dp discuss the shots. The AD makes note of the plan, and offers advisement when necessary and appropriate.

Once the day's work is presented – in shooting order, it becomes much easier to see where the safe areas are, and which areas are not safe. It is always preferable to stage equipment in an area where it will be easy to access, and not have to be moved unless needed to be used for the work on set.

Staging equipment

The camera department should always have their own dedicated space for storing cases and equipment as well as for loading and downloading magazines. This area should be clean, provide enough room for the work needed and be away from the shooting set, as well as out of the way of foot traffic.

The grip and electrical department should also find a suitable staging area. This is done to facilitate efficiency and safety on set.

Lamps should be arranged neatly in rows according to size, and each lamp should be complete with barn doors and a full set of scrims. They can be on stands, or the stands can be staged neatly and according to size nearby. No lamp should ever come on set with out its barn doors and scrims and stand.

Grip equipment should be staged neatly nearby so that when an electrician brings a light on set, a grip follows with a c stand, a flag and two sand bags – one for the lamp and one for the c-stand. Of course, there will be times when you will need more c-stands and more flags, but one is a start.

When ever a lamp is brought on set, it needs to have power. A lamp without electricity is useless; so, the electricians need to coordinate their efforts – either one electrician will set the lamp and run power – or as on a professional set, a second electrician will run power as the first electrician is setting the lamp. When the lamp is on the stand, he/she can then immediately turn it on and the beam is ready to be focused, gelled, diffused, scrimmed – whatever the cinematographer needs. Once the lamp is set, the sand bag is used to secure the stand in place. Never walk away from a lamp without first checking that all the knuckles on the lamp and stand are tight. Also, make sure the power chord from the head drops straight to the ground, then runs flat on the ground to the power supply. Any excess cable needs to be coiled neatly at the base of the lamp.

Once a lamp is in position, the grips will then use flags, nets and silks or diffusion in frames, secured by c-stands to shape and control the light. Remember to extend the arm first, then each riser starting with the top riser until the flag (etc) is at the correct height and in the correct position. If you begin with the bottom riser, you may run out of extension before the flag is at the correct height. If you do not need to fully extend each riser, only extend each one partially. The top riser is the most narrow, and thus the weakest. After each c-stand is set, a sand bag is used to secure it in place. Gobo arms are extended over the tall leg. The Sand bag is set on the tall leg. When working on a hill, with a c-stand with a “rocky mountain leg” use common sense to set the stand and bag it safely.

After each lighting set up, wrap the set to the staging area to make room for blocking, then light the next set up.

Equipment that is not staged neatly and orderly, slows down the production. It can also result in expensive damages. Take care of your equipment and it will take care of you.

Care of equipment

Flags, Silks and Nets

When set down (not in a box) flags should lie on one edge so that the spud or pin points to the side, and not straight up. There are two reasons for this:

- 1) if the flag is resting against a wall or other object, the spud will not be resting on the wall, and therefore will not scratch or damage it.
- 2) if a smaller flag is resting against a larger flag, the spud will not put pressure on the larger flag thereby decreasing the potential for damaging it. (punctures are particularly common problems with nets and silks)

Open ended silks and nets should be stored so that the open side faces up.

They are more delicate and more susceptible to tearing and therefore the open side should not be the side on which the frame rests.

Flags, Silks and Nets should be organized according to size and function for protection as well as for ease of use when needed. The Larger frames should be set against the wall first, then in descending order. Within each size category, the flags, silks, doubles and singles should be stored together. Each size category should be sandwiched between two flags for protection.

Neither Flags, Silks nor Nets should lie flat on the ground where they can be stepped on or become dirty

These are expensive to repair and essential to our work and should be used, stored and cared for properly.

Changing an Halogen Light Bulb

Never touch the bulb with your bare hands. The oils from your hands (fingers) can severely reduce the life of the bulb, and can result in a dangerous explosion of hot glass. Never touch a hot bulb which could result in severe burns. Never replace the bulb in a lamp without first unplugging it.

If a lamp burns out on set, it is best to unplug it, replace the head with another similar unit and wait for the bulb to cool until it can be replaced safely. It is also important to place a piece of cloth tape across the front of the fresnel with the initials B.O. written on it with a black sharpie. (B.O. stands for burned out) This will prevent the lamp from being brought to set only to learn again that it does not work.

If you suspect that the bulb is fine, but the switch is not working – then place your B.O. tape on the switch.

Trouble shooting failed equipment

If a flag has a tear in it you can use black paper tape to cover the hole. You do not want to use gaffers tape, because if placed in front of a hot light, the gaffers tape will burn more quickly than the paper tape.

If a lamp is not working you must determine the source of the problem. There are several specialized tools available to help you find the problem. All are helpful, though only one is essential. The ohm/voltage meter.

First determine if there is electricity – you can do this either by using your voltage meter, or an inductive voltage tester or by plugging in a lamp that you know to be working. If there is power, then the problem could be in the hubble (plug), the cable, the switch, the lamp housing or bulb.

If you are using an inductive voltage tester, you can easily move the tester along the line with the power on and the switch turned on. You will hear beeping as long as there is power. If the beeping stops above the switch – confirm that it is on and test again. If it still fails, then the switch is at least one of the problems. Unplug the light and have the switch checked. If the switch is not the problem, then it is likely the bulb. (In fact it is most likely the bulb 95% of the time.)

Unplug the fixture and wait for the bulb to cool, once it is cool, visually inspect it. If you see evidence of carbon build up inside the bulb, look closer and you will likely find a broken filament. You will need to remove the damaged bulb and replace it with a good one. Save the burned out bulb to return it to the PEC. Some damage is normal wear and tear – burned out bulbs fall into this category. If you dispose of the damaged bulb, the PEC has no way of knowing that it was due to normal wear and tear and you will be billed. If you return it and show it to the PEC, they will most likely not bill you, and they will replace the spares for the next group to check out the light so they will have what they need for their shoot.

After replacing the damaged bulb – test the lamp before bringing it back on set. Bringing broken equipment on set wastes time.