

NEW ORLEANS LOCAL – BACKGROUND ACTOR / EXTRA Q&A

We get a lot of questions about working as a background actor/extra in Louisiana and Mississippi. There's a lot of confusion and many myths relating to this subject. We hope the following helps answer your questions.

Q: Is work as a background actor or extra covered under SAG-AFTRA contracts?

A: Most of our contracts have some coverage for background actors or extras. For our contracts covering theatrical films and dramatic television and commercials, the coverage is only in specific areas of the country where SAG-AFTRA has a zone/jurisdiction and is limited to a specific number of performers working each day.

Q: Do Louisiana and Mississippi have these geographic zones?

A: Louisiana and Mississippi are not covered by any of the background actor zones in the SAG-AFTRA contract covering theatrical films and dramatic television. There is a 100 mile zone from the center of New Orleans covering extras in commercials. Commercial producers are required to place up to a maximum of 45 performers on a SAG-AFTRA contract per commercial for each day of production.

Q: If we don't have a theatrical or dramatic television background zone in Louisiana and Mississippi, can I work in those States as a background actor?

A: It is your choice to work as a background actor on these productions and as long as they are signed to a SAG-AFTRA contract, you will not be in violation of the Rule 1/"No Contract No Work" rules. Before deciding to do this work, you need to be aware that SAG-AFTRA will not be able to assist you if a problem arises. Since we don't have a zone, the contractual provisions would not extend to your work and you are on your own if you have a problem with your payment, working conditions, etc. It is also important to keep in mind that your earnings will not be reported to the AFTRA Health and Retirement Funds or the SAG Pension and Health Plans.

Q: If I work as a stand-in, is that work covered everywhere?

A: Work as a stand-in is considered background work and would only be covered for theatrical and dramatic television where we have a zone.

Q: For theatrical and dramatic television, which areas have this zone coverage?

A: The West Coast has six background actor zones: Hawaii, Las Vegas, Los Angeles, Sacramento, San Diego, and San Francisco. There is a 300 mile zone around New York which also encompasses major East Coast cities such as Boston, Philadelphia, and Washington, D.C. There is a 30 mile zone around Albuquerque City Hall for Netflix productions only. We do not have zones beyond these areas. So other major production centers such as Florida, Georgia, Illinois and Texas do not have background actor coverage for theatrical films and dramatic television.

Q: Does the lack of background actor coverage have something to do with Right-to-Work laws?

A: No, the location of the zones has nothing to do with Right-to-Work laws. The zones in these contracts were determined through bargaining and have nothing to do with specific laws in any State.

Q: How do we achieve background coverage for theatrical films and dramatic television production? Can Staff do this?

A: Coverage can only be achieved through bargaining when these contracts are being negotiated (typically every three years). Neither Staff nor your elected officials can unilaterally achieve background

actor jurisdiction beyond the currently established zones.

Q: Why do we have coverage in commercials and not for theatrical and dramatic television?

These are different contracts bargained with different industry groups. There is much greater coverage of extras under the Commercials Contract than the contracts covering theatrical films and dramatic television.

Q: Does background actor work on theatrical films and dramatic television in Louisiana and Mississippi establish SAG-AFTRA membership eligibility for non-members?

A: No, since it is not covered work, any vouchers received for that work do not count toward establishing eligibility.

Q: If I choose to work as a background actor in a SAG-AFTRA theatrical film or dramatic television, what happens if I get a principal or stunt upgrade?

A: You should be provided with a SAG-AFTRA employment contract and covered under contract. If you are not, please contact SAG-AFTRA immediately so we can determine whether a claim should be filed. The contract provides a strict 90 day limit for filing upgrade claims. You should never wait until the film is released as we will be unable to file a claim at that point.

Q: If I work on a commercial as an extra, what do I get paid?

A: For commercials produced under the national 2022 Commercials Contract, the minimum rate is \$427.30 for unlimited use. For commercials produced under the 2022 New Orleans Local Code, the minimum rate is \$385.00. If you are represented by a talent agent, producers must pay an additional 10% to cover the agency fee on commercial extra work.

Q: Can a member work "over the numbers" as a commercial extra if the 45 covered extra roles are already filled?

A: No, it is a violation of SAG-AFTRA rules to accept such "over the numbers" work.

Q: If a commercial is being produced outside of the 100 mile New Orleans zone, may I take such non-covered extra work?

A: Yes, you may work outside the zone as a commercial extra but the same considerations apply regarding lack of contractual protection as when you work locally as a background actor on theatrical and dramatic television programs.

Q: Except for commercials, are there any instances where work as a background actor is covered by SAG-AFTRA in Louisiana and Mississippi?

A: There is coverage for certain non-dramatic programs, programs made for the CW network, as well as corporate educational productions and music videos. There is also an infrequently used incentive in the Modified Low Budget Agreement which allows producers to adjust their budget if they employ background actors under contract. If you have questions about coverage and whether you can do specific work and remain in compliance with SAG-AFTRA rules, please contact the union.

Q: I still have questions about working as a background actor. What do I do?

A: Call the Background Actors Department at **(323) 549-6811** or email backgroundactorsinfo@sagaftra.org and a staff member will answer your questions.