



THE SAFE WAY FORWARD

Return to Work Agreement FAQs

Q / What is the Return To Work Agreement (“RTW Agreement”)?

The Return To Work Agreement or “RTW Agreement” is the COVID-19 Return to Work Agreement with DGA, IATSE, SAG-AFTRA and Teamsters/Basic Crafts and the AMPTP, dated as of September 21, 2020. **This agreement generally applies to scripted, dramatic entertainment programs** produced under the SAG-AFTRA Codified Basic Agreement, SAG-AFTRA Television Agreement, SAG-AFTRA Television Animation Agreement and SAG-AFTRA Basic Cable Animation Agreement, and may apply in other circumstances on a case by case basis.

[Click here](#) to review the document in full.

Q / What is the policy regarding COVID-19 liability waivers?

Performers should not sign any waiver of liability or assumption of risk related to COVID-19. When the union becomes aware of these, we notify production that they cannot require these types of documents as a condition of employment without first bargaining with the union. It is the union’s position that unless negotiated with us, these forms are ineffective anyway. We have had this discussion with many productions resulting in elimination or substantial modification of such documents.

Q / Will the Return to Work Agreement protocols change the casting process?

Yes. Our framework recommends:

- All first auditions should be virtual unless there is a specific reason why a virtual audition would not suffice.
- Second “live” auditions be scheduled at spaced intervals to accommodate physical distancing, with a waiting place for actors to congregate where physical distancing can apply and, if appropriate, an option to wait in cars and be called.
- Actors receive scripts/rundowns/schedules digitally, with provisions made for confidentiality, i.e., digitally signed confidentiality agreements.
- Actors check in via an app from outside the casting area and are called via a text when it’s their time.

- If an in-person group audition is required, actors should have a partition placed in between them, or at a minimum wear clear face shields, all of which to be provided by the producer.

Q/ Should performers be put on contract starting on the COVID-19 test date?

Not necessarily. The performer would only be obligated to the producer on days between testing and commencement of services if the producer puts the performer on contract and begins paying for a hold/quarantine day(s). However, the possibility of infection between the time of testing and the shoot day is part of the reason why repeat testing is required.

Our experts have advised that the virus generally becomes contagious within 72 hours after infection. This timeline is what guides the repeat testing protocols.

Q/ What is the policy if I test positive for COVID-19 at the studio prior to the job?

A producer may condition an offer of employment on the individual undergoing pre-employment testing and returning a negative result. This means that if you test positive during the pre-employment testing phase, the producer does not have to engage you. If you test positive after being engaged, you may be entitled to sick leave pay.

The Return to Work (RTW) agreement states that the producer shall follow CDC guidelines in effect at the time or the guidelines of the local governmental authority in effect at the time, whichever is stricter, with respect to the treatment of other employees (e.g. testing, quarantine, or self-isolation) who have been exposed to the employee who tested positive. The employee(s) who was (were) exposed to the employee who tested positive shall also comply with those guidelines.

If the performer has been engaged, then tests positive or shows symptoms on a temperature check or health screening, and is then sent home, the performer is subject to sick leave pay for the day per the sick leave provisions of the CBA or any applicable statute, if any, and once exhausted, pursuant to the sick leave provisions of the RTW.

This does not apply to series contract performers, performers employed under Schedule F and stunt coordinators employed under Schedule K-III.

Q/ What is the payment for the time I spend getting tested for COVID-19?

If a performer or background actor, other than a series regular or Schedule F performer, undergoes testing for COVID-19 on a day on which they are not otherwise paid for the day, they are entitled to a stipend as follows:

- \$250 stipend per day for a principal performer who travels outside his or her home to undergo a test in which the performer does not work for producer. (This does not apply to series regulars or Schedule F performers.)
- \$100 per day for a background actor who travels outside his or her home to undergo a test on a day in which the performer does not work for producer (plus pension & health if the background actor is ultimately employed by the producer following the test).
- \$20 per day for a performer or background actor self-administering a test at home on a day in which the performer does not work for the producer. (This does not apply to series regulars or Schedule F performers.)

The stipends include payment for time spent completing COVID-19 training of up to an hour (which need not occur on the same day as the test), plus time spent completing paperwork.

If the performer works on the same day as the COVID-19 testing, time spent in testing shall be part of the continuous work day. This means, if you report for testing prior to your call time, your clock for the day will start with the testing.

No stipend is due if the employee is otherwise paid for the day (eg. payment of a travel allowance to a performer or payment for a hold day).

Please note that on a day where a performer or background actor is both COVID-19 tested and fitted on the same day, the union's position is that producer must pay for both the testing stipend and any applicable payment for time spent in fitting as the fitting fees do not constitute payment for the day. Performers are advised to contact the union if they have not been paid correctly. We will be filing claims on their behalf.

A performer required to self-administer a temperature check or fill out a health assessment survey prior to reporting to work on a day in which such performer also does work for producer shall be paid an additional one-tenth (1/10) of an hour. No additional stipend is required in connection with these health assessments provided they are as described in the Return to Work Agreement.

Q / What is the policy for COVID-19 testing locations and who covers the cost?

The producer is obligated to cover the cost of testing. As such, the union cannot dictate the location of testing. We are hopeful that the production companies will work with performers with respect to scheduling testing subject to the performer's professional availability. However, there are requirements that may make this difficult, including the time-frames for testing found in the Return to Work Agreement. (See section 2.A. starting on page 4 of the RTW Agreement).

Q / What is the payment for travel and COVID-19 quarantine?

The existing travel rules of the contract remain in place for travel days. If travel and pre-production quarantine is required by the producer, the union's current position is that the performer should be compensated for it. For productions subject to the Return to Work Agreement, the payment for time spent in quarantine shall be no less than:

- For principal performers under certain money breaks, no less than the minimum weekly scale rate required by the applicable collective bargaining agreement (e.g., the Schedule B minimum for productions subject to the Codified Basic Agreement or TV Agreement). Each payment of one week constitutes payment for 7 days of quarantine. Pro-ration may be done on the basis of 1/5 of the weekly rate. (This does not apply to series regulars engaged at \$20k or more per episode, TV Schedule F performers engaged at \$40k or more per picture, nor Theatrical Schedule F performers engaged at \$80k or more per picture.)
- For background actors, no less than the scale rate per day for the first 5 out of every 7 days.

If you are required to quarantine during the production period (also known as sequester or bubble), please contact the union for additional details related to payment.

Q / During COVID-19, if I get the job, what am I going to need to think about in terms of travel to the production location?

If you must travel by plane or other inter-city transport, you should take all precautions of social distancing and sanitization—for example, wear a mask at all times while in public, wipe down surfaces as much as feasible (such as plane seats and tray tables) and maintain six feet separation with other travelers whenever possible.

Before traveling by plane, you must be tested and cleared 48 hours (or in some cases 72 hours) before the flight—this helps to ensure that any person who is carrying the virus but might be asymptomatic does not board a flight, and, then, introduce the virus to the production area once on the ground.

Q / What is the COVID-19 Zone System for productions covered by the Return to Work Agreement?

The RTW Agreement provides that there will be at least four Zones: **Zone A**, **Zone B**, **Zone C** and **Zone D**. Some productions may choose to have additional zones with heightened safety protocols.

- **Zone A** is any perimeter within which activity occurs without physical distancing or the use of PPE and includes all principal performers and background actors. This is the Zone with the most *potential* for transmission because some activity will take place in which PPE is removed. **The number of people in Zone A will be severely limited. If you are cleared for Zone A, you will likely be tested three times a week at a minimum; when circumstances require — such as extensive intimate scenes or scenes involving extreme physical exertion — testing may be daily.**
- **Zone B** consists of those employees who work on a “hot” set, but who are not present in a workspace with a performer or background actor while the performer or background actor is not wearing PPE. Use of PPE and stringent physical distancing practices are observed and enforced within Zone B. **Individuals in Zone B will be tested at least once per week.**
- **Zone C** consists of employees who can wear PPE at all times, only work with other employees wearing PPE, are not required to be within six feet of anyone for more than 15 minutes and do not come into contact with Zone A or B employees. **Individuals in Zone C will be tested at least once every two weeks.**
- **Zone D** is everyone else, including the outside world cast and crew go to when not working—their homes, hotels, or other public places. Everything we do in Zone D has the potential to effect Zone A and B. So, while everyone gets tested prior to entering Zone A or B for the first time and, then, on a regular basis, the production set has a higher chance of remaining a safe place if cast and crew remain vigilant and practice social distancing and high-level sanitization while in the off-set Zone D. **Individuals in Zone D do not require periodic testing.**
- The Zone system will force everyone to ask a fundamental question: what Zone do I absolutely need to be in to do my job and why am I standing in a specific area if I am not needed there? Any protocol, security zone or checkpoint can only work seamlessly if every individual does a self-check and adheres to each guidelines.

Please note that some productions may use other names for the zones, such as a color system, but the system should still follow the parameters set forth above.

- Each day, cast and crew arrive at a medical checkpoint. Each person’s temperature is taken.
- No one will be allowed access to Zone A or Zone B for the first time unless they have been tested and cleared in accordance with the Zone A testing protocol—people may carry the virus and show no symptoms so it’s crucial to aggressively test from the outset to isolate any carriers of the virus.
- Regular testing will vary from daily to three times-a-week to weekly, depending on where your role requires you to be. For example, what if you are cleared to Zone B—and you are being tested weekly—but need access to Zone A? You cannot enter Zone A until you are tested and cleared in accordance with the Zone A testing protocol.

Q / Will COVID-19 testing frequency be decided by other factors in addition to the Zone system?

Yes. Our assumption takes into account the outside efforts by public health officials to contain the infection rate and transmission rate of COVID-19. Testing protocols may be adjusted by mutual agreement of the producer and the unions if circumstances warrant, for example, in areas of low prevalence of COVID-19.

Q / During the COVID-19 Return to Work Agreement, will Personal Protection Equipment be available at the set location?

The production must provide face masks, and in some cases face shields, to be made available at the set's medical checkpoint at the start of each day.

Q / What is the best way to get to the set so a performer adheres to all protocols?

If possible, drive yourself and park in the Crew Lot, which be secured from the public, attendants or owners of the lot. Whenever possible, avoid public transportation which creates the possibility of being infected.

If you park in a production lot (CREW), you are immediately entering into an area considered Zone B which will have a medical checkpoint.

Once you take company transportation — either from the production lot or from any other location (such as a hotel, or, if you are picked up from home) you are considered to be in Zone B and you must observe social distancing.

Q / Is check-in time at the studio (for medical clearance, document signing etc) considered work time?

Your work day starts at the time you are directed to report; however, all time spent in self-administering a temperature check or filling out a health assessment survey, provided that it is limited to the activities as described in the Return to Work Agreement, shall be paid as 1/10 of an hour.

Q / How will the Return to Work Agreement safety standards be reinforced to everyone?

There will be a health safety meeting. At the meeting, the 1st Assistant Director and COVID-19 Compliance Supervisor (also known as the Health Safety Supervisor or COVID Compliance Officer) will brief cast and crew, emphasizing the protocols and making sure each individual completes a declaration about any symptoms they might be experiencing and/or any possible exposure to symptoms consistent with COVID-19.

SAG-AFTRA expects all performers and crew to abide by the safety protocols and should hold each other accountable. Please contact the union if there are any concerns or if you otherwise need assistance.

Q / Who will make sure the applicable safety protocols, such as the Return to Work Agreement and The Safe Way Forward, are adhered to?

As an employer, it is the producer's responsibility to maintain a safe working environment. However, SAG-AFTRA is working closely with signatory employers to ensure compliance with appropriate protocols if necessary. The Return to Work Agreement provides the specific safety protocol parameters needed.

There is a Health Safety Team, led by a COVID-19 Compliance Supervisor (also known as the Health Safety Supervisor or COVID Compliance Officer). Their broad assignments include:

- Make sure all the testing procedures are followed rigorously;
- Make sure the set is fully stocked with PPE, all areas are sanitized and safe (including assessing ventilation, air filtration and circulation, and the disinfecting of surfaces, property, equipment and tools);
- Make sure hand washing, sanitizing and disinfecting stations are set up and fully functional, as well as ensure hand sanitizer is broadly available—all of which will be carried out by a dedicated Hygiene Crew; and
- Make sure all checkpoints are in force.

The COVID-19 Compliance Supervisor is the final authority on any COVID-19 matters and has the power to halt production in the case of a breach in procedures or testing results that raise concerns about virus infections or spread. Employees should immediately report any concerns directly to the COVID-19 Compliance Supervisor.

Q/ Where will performers congregate during shooting?

Performers wait their turn in an area that is sanitized and separated from the crew. Background performers have their own holding areas, which, for small scenes, will be as close as possible to the set—and provide adequate bathrooms, and hand sanitizing stations.

You will notice much less foot traffic around a set—production crew, especially the 1st AD, will set up scenes and do in-between adjustments—such as moving walls or furniture—by staggering on-set presence of department personnel to minimize the number of people and, thus, maintain social distancing.

Q/ What is the policy for quarantine payment if a show shuts down because of a COVID-19 positive test?

This is a complicated question as it would depend upon the facts. Depending on the type of performer and the person that tested positive, the production may or may not shut down. This also depends upon whether the CDC and/or other regulatory scheme can require the production shut down.

You should contact the union in the event that your production shuts down due to a COVID-19-related incident. Your rights will depend on a variety of factors including your form of engagement (e.g., daily, weekly, series regular), how much you are compensated and the reason for the shutdown (e.g., whether it was ordered by a governmental authority).

Performers who are required to quarantine/isolate due to a COVID-related shutdown, their own positive test result or their own possible exposure may be entitled to sick pay and should consult with the union if sick pay is not provided. With respect to anyone that was not potentially exposed, the employer has the right to request a waiver of consecutive employment from SAG-AFTRA or the right to renegotiate your agreement. In some cases therefore, a performer may not be entitled to additional payment as a result of the COVID-19 related shutdown.

In some cases, you may also be entitled to additional compensation under certain government regulations in certain jurisdictions. Please contact SAG-AFTRA for more information.

Q/ What happens if I test positive for COVID-19 during the production?

You will be directed to immediately self-quarantine—while, at the same time, a second test will be run to confirm the diagnosis of the first positive result. If the tests contradict each other, a third test will be performed. These procedures may be modified to comply with government or health authority requirements.

Q/ How will meal times take place? Many productions are reporting they will not break but rather deliver meals to be eaten when possible? What is the payment for French Hours?

The Return to Work Agreement does not authorize French Hours and Meal Period Violations continue to apply for failure to break for meals as required by our contracts. We are aware, however, that there have been changing practices with respect to the provision of meals that may or may not be in compliance with our contracts. These challenges have emerged as producers try to adapt to a new set of meal requirements in the RTW Agreement, including the prohibition of

open catering, the corresponding requirement that all food provided by production come in pre-packaged, take-away containers and physical distancing requirements. We are in continuing dialogue with employers on this issue to find the best path forward. We will update our response as the situation develops.

Q / Does the Return to Work Agreement accommodate rehearsals?

If possible, rehearsals will be done in a manner to allow performers to wear PPE and practice robust social distancing of 6 feet. Additionally, if possible, a rehearsal will take place after that day's regular schedule the night before the scenes are to be filmed, in order to run through scenes with the fewest people on set as possible.

Q / What is being done to protect the private health information of members?

Medical records are confidential and the production should be treating them as such. Temperature check results should not be publicly announced. If this is not true on any set, please let the union know right away so that we can address it with the producer.

Q / Are we sharing trailers during COVID-19?

No, neither trailers nor dressing rooms should be shared at this time, unless the circumstances are such that the producer can make appropriate accommodations for distancing, sanitization, and ventilation in shared spaces.

Q / What COVID-19 safety protocols will be in place during hair and makeup?

The same philosophy will be enforced for a safe work space in the hair and makeup areas: Restrict and control the number of people who have access to hair and makeup trailers and workspaces and ensure proper physical distancing and ventilation.

Each time a performer has been in the chair, strict cleaning procedures will take place for the work areas and bathrooms, leaving adequate time to disinfect and re-set the area by wiping down frequently affected areas such as doorknobs, sinks and counters— and those procedures will take place before, during and at the end of a production day.

Here are some additional specifics you will see in the hair and makeup areas.

- Special attention will be given to maximizing ventilation in hair and makeup workspaces.
- Full PPE must be worn by hair and makeup artists at all times while in proximity to performers (e.g., masks and face shields, gloves as appropriate).
- Limit the amount of time when PPE is not worn by actors to the bare minimum. Hair and makeup should be planned to minimize the amount of time an actor is required to remove PPE. For example, a performer may be able to wear a mask while having their eyes or hair done, and only need to remove the performer's mask when the relevant areas are worked on. Once made up, a performer may consider employing a face shield, as opposed to a mask, so that completed make-up is not disturbed. Handheld face shields must be provided to performers for use during the time they are unable to use other types of PPE.
- As is true at all times throughout the production cycle, everyone in the hair and makeup area will perform CDC-recommended guidelines for hand washing before and after working on each individual's hair or makeup.
- Each professional tool (e.g., brushes, applicators) will be assigned to one actor and not used for anyone else. Disposable tools will be utilized whenever possible. After each use, non-disposable hairbrushes, combs and makeup brushes will be cleaned with appropriate disinfecting solutions.

- All supplies should be kept in individual cast bags.
- A disposable palette for each individual should be used to mix foundation, powders, lipstick, or other compounds;
- Kits will need to include multiples for most makeup.
- No food or drink should be present at the makeup and hair stations, except for personal water bottles that should be handled only by the individual.
- Hair and makeup departments shall have COVID-19 specific Health and Safety training with particular attention to working with performers who are not wearing PPE.

Q/ What safety protocols will protect me when it comes to costume and wardrobe?

The same philosophy will be enforced for a safe work space: Restrict and control the number of people who have access to the costume and wardrobe work areas. Advance planning will be employed to avoid overcrowding in costume and wardrobe areas.

In addition:

- Crew will exercise the same rigorous sanitation protocols employed throughout the production, cleaning hands before and after handling any costumes, accessories, and other items.
- PPE will be worn for duration of person-to-person contact.
- In-depth planning will be done ahead for shopping and pulling needed items from rental houses. Delays at rental houses, retail stores, and in shipping items should be anticipated.
- Booking cast as early as possible and get sizes as early as possible to avoid unneeded traffic in the area.
- Only the costume department personnel will touch wardrobe items until those items are provided to the performer.
- Each performer will have her/his costumes and outfits bagged separately for safety.
- All items will be properly disinfected with CDC-approved chemical, solutions or methods before they are provided to the performer and after use.
- Props will be given special attention upon arrival and touched up with disinfectant wipes and other methods (see “Props” info below).
- Performers will have a separate, private area to receive a costume or item, and maintain appropriate physical distancing from other performers and costume staff.
- Fitting photos should be taken by one person, not multiple people touching the same phone, tablet, or other electronic device.
- Any items needing special cleaning requirements should be done using the customary process before its given to the performer. Based on the scientific data to-date, steam/hot washing items is sufficient to disinfect wardrobe and other costume items, while jewelry should be disinfected using materials that will not cause damage.
- When dealing with items likely to be degraded by steam/hot washing, production could utilize quarantines of at least seven hours in “hot boxes” as an acceptable disinfectant-level alternative.
- Stunt body pads should be purchased by production for each performer’s individual use (coordinator can advise on brands, etc.) instead of being provided by the stunt coordinator or other stunt performers.

Q/ How will the COVID-19 safety protocols govern the handling of props?

Similar to other areas of the production, access to props will be severely restricted. Props crew must exercise the same

rigorous sanitation protocols employed throughout the production, cleaning hands before and after handling any costumes, accessories, props and other items.

In addition:

- Props “show-and-tell” should be done virtually with photos or, when required, at a dedicated table separate from the main props storage area.
- Only members of the props departments will touch items until it is clear what an actor will need.
- Set pieces, props and surfaces performers are working on, or with, will be sanitized before and after use.
- Food and beverage props items intended for use on set should be prepared in multiple identical set ups to minimize the need for anyone to touch food set ups after placement. All food safety protocols for COVID prevention must also be followed.
- All props must be kept secure in storage and on set.
- Stunt mats should be disinfected before and after different users, per manufacturer protocols;
- The personal effects of performers should remain with the performer at all times, except when personal necessity items on set are maintained in an individually designated safe area.

Q / How will stunt performers be protected during COVID-19?

It is the producer’s responsibility to provide a safe work environment; however, this does not prohibit a producer from seeking the stunt coordinator’s input in creating the protocols for a production.

Production is required to provide SAG-AFTRA with representations that their protocols comply with applicable safety rules and guidelines such as The Safe Way Forward, the Industry White Paper, and the Return to Work Agreement (depending on the type of project). SAG-AFTRA also has the ability to review each production’s written safety protocols, as needed. These protocols are specific to the production — especially as it relates to the types of scenes, locations, hazardous conditions and mitigation stunt performers are likely to encounter.

Q / During COVID-19, are stunts required to have their own personal wardrobe/props/pads? Who provides these items (specifically stunt pads)?

There will be no sharing of pads from one performer to another. If the performer has their own pads, they are encouraged to bring their own; however, if they do not have the pads applicable to the gag being performed, the stunt coordinator should advise the producer and the pads purchased and provided to the performer at no cost. The performer should clean the pads that they place next to their person according to the manufacturers specifications (usually soap & water).

Q / During COVID-19, what is the cleaning requirement for stunt mats and pads? Steering wheels/cars? Who cleans them?

All equipment related to stunts (e.g. vests, mats, pads) have specific methodologies for cleaning between every use by a different performer and at the end of the day for overnight storage. The cleaning procedures must be according to the manufacturer’s specifications and any additional measures required by production safety for the protections of performers.

The producer is responsible for providing a safe set, including cleaning of equipment; however, it may vary set to set as to who actually does the cleaning. If your equipment is damaged as a result of the producer cleaning it, the union would take the position that the producer should pay for repair or replacement.

Q / During COVID-19, how will voiceover performers be protected?

Although voiceover work does not occur on a film set, the same principles apply in a studio:

- Widespread use of personal protection equipment. When any member is doing studio work, masks must be made available.
- Strict physical distancing will be a constant, largely accomplished by reducing the overall number of people working in the audio house or studio and strictly controlling who enters the VO booth. This change tracks with the best advice we are given in our daily lives to “bend the curve” of the pandemic and keep a distance from people as much as possible.
- Constant sanitation and cleaning of every nook and cranny, every device, and every tool — before, during and after work.
- Appropriate ventilation and/or air filtration to assure that air in enclosed spaces and booths does not become a source of infection.
- A dedicated safety team whose sole task is to ensure the protocols are implemented and adhered to at every moment by production executives.

Q / Are payments received in connection with COVID-19 protocols subject to commission by my agent?

In some cases, payments connected to time spent in quarantine and sick leave may be commissionable. Generally, stipends for COVID-19 testing are not commissionable. Contact the SAG-AFTRA Professional Representatives Department for more details.

The Return to Work Agreement generally applies to scripted, dramatic entertainment programs — theatrical/television/new media.