

# Electronic News Gathering Camera and Live Truck Safety Fact Sheet

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Living in an information-driven society has increased the pressure to gather and share news quickly — on TV, online, and across social media. Newsrooms now rely on a mix of traditional **electronic news gathering (ENG)** cameras, large-sensor cinema and mirrorless cameras, smartphones, drones, bonded cellular backpacks, and “live” trucks or compact uplink vehicles to cover stories from nearly any location. This equipment — and the fast-changing environments where it’s used — can pose safety risks if not managed properly.



## Camera and field risk factors

Television and digital news have changed dramatically with lightweight cameras, wireless audio, drones, and live-streaming tools. While the technology has evolved, the physical and situational hazards for camera operators and field crews remain, but new risks such as hostile crowds, targeted harassment, and digital theft have grown. To stay safe:

- **Use safe lifting and carrying techniques.** Keep cameras and batteries close to your body, bend at the knees, and avoid twisting or lifting gear at arm’s length. Use carts or dollies for heavy cases and balance loads to reduce strain and prevent slips and falls.
- **Support equipment and protect your body.** Whenever possible, place cameras on a tripod, monopod, or other support instead of carrying them on your shoulder for long periods. Use fitted straps, harnesses, or rigs, along with ergonomic accessories and frequent microbreaks, to reduce fatigue.
- **Maintain strong situational awareness.** Scan the area before setting up, choosing stable surfaces and avoiding edges, weak structures, and cluttered pathways. At protests, disasters, or crime scenes, watch crowd behavior, exit routes, weather, and changes in law-enforcement posture.
- **Avoid ladders and unsafe elevated positions.** Do not film from ladders, unstable platforms, railings, or vehicle roofs not designed for standing. Use approved platforms or lifts instead. If you must work at heights, follow your employer’s fall-protection procedures and avoid overreaching.
- **Condition for the work and use personal protective equipment (PPE).** Regular exercise, including shoulder-strengthening exercises and stretches, can help condition a camera

operator's upper body and lower back. Consult a doctor and seek advice from a trainer for appropriate exercises.

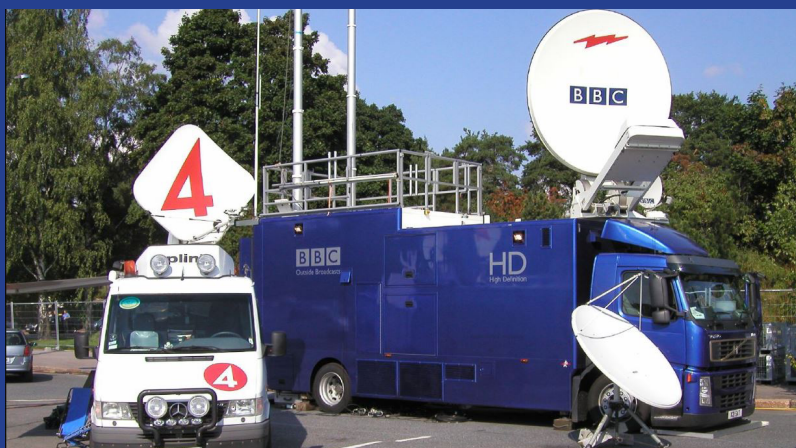
- **Plan for hostile or unpredictable environments.** For assignments involving civil unrest or high-risk locations, follow your newsroom's risk assessment and consider hostile-environment or first-aid training. Establish check-ins, buddy systems when possible, and clear guidelines for when to withdraw.

## "Live" truck and uplink vehicle safety

"Live trucks" include ENG, digital satellite news gathering (DSNG), and hybrid vehicles. These vehicles transmit live audio and video using microwave, satellite, or bonded cellular systems. They carry heavy masts, antennas, and electronic equipment that can create serious hazards, especially near traffic or overhead power lines. Key safety practices include:

- **Drive defensively and manage vehicle handling.** Live trucks have a high center of gravity and may need longer stopping distances when fully loaded. Obey traffic laws, avoid distractions, use spotters in tight areas, and wear high-visibility apparel when working near traffic.

- **Raise and lower masts safely.** Only trained personnel should operate the mast. Follow written procedures and perform site checks before each deployment. Use controls that require constant pressure and provide a clear overhead view. Never move a vehicle with the mast raised.
- **Control overhead and ground-level hazards.** Before raising a mast, look for power lines, trees, signs, bridges, and other obstacles. Park on level ground, use level indicators or built-in sensors, and avoid soft shoulders, slopes, or areas that could flood or become unstable.
- **Use lights, indicators, and alarms.** Equip vehicles with bright spotlights to check overhead hazards in low-visibility conditions. Maintain audio and visual alarms that warn if the mast is up or if the vehicle moves with equipment deployed. Test these systems regularly.
- **Inspect and maintain systems.** Follow preventive maintenance schedules for hydraulic systems, outriggers, and masts, including monthly checks or inspections after any damage or near miss. Document all inspections and ensure only qualified technicians repair mast and radiofrequency (RF) systems.



Courtesy Wikimedia Commons BBC HD SNG.jpg and MSH04 news media trucks at CVO office 10-02-04 med.jpg



## RF exposure and antenna safety

Antennas on live trucks, fixed sites, and portable transmitters can expose workers to RF energy if they are too close or within the main beam. Excessive RF exposure can cause tissue heating, shocks, or burns and may exceed [Federal Communications Commission](#) (FCC) limits if controls are not in place. To reduce RF risks:

- **Train workers on RF hazards.** Ensure operators and staff who work near antennas understand RF basics, hazard zones, signage, and lockout or power-down procedures. Include RF safety in onboarding and refresher training, and coordinate with property owners near rooftop or tower antennas.
- **Comply with exposure limits and signage requirements.** Follow FCC and other applicable guidance for [maximum permissible exposure](#), including site assessments when required. Use approved warning signs, physical barriers, and procedures that keep workers and the public out of restricted RF areas.
- **Use distance, shielding, and safe positioning.** Stay clear of the main beam of active antennas whenever possible. Use remote controls or power-down options and position workers behind shielding or on higher ground when operating radios or uplinks. De-energize or reduce power before maintenance and verify exposure levels with engineering staff.



## Parking, crowd, and scene safety

Events can change rapidly. Protests can escalate, weather can worsen, and crime scenes can expand creating the need to reposition or leave quickly. Crews also face increasing risks of harassment, assault, and equipment theft, especially during emotionally charged events.

- **Park with an exit strategy.** Choose locations that allow safe distancing from crowds and hazards and that provide a clear escape route. Avoid blocking emergency access and coordinate placement with law enforcement or site officials when possible.
- **Stay aware, mobile, and ready to withdraw.** Continuously monitor crowd behavior, weather, traffic, and law-enforcement direction. Adjust camera positions and cables to avoid trip hazards. If tension rises or conditions feel unsafe, crews should have full authority to relocate or leave.
- **Protect keys, devices, and data.** Keep vehicle keys and critical gear secure and accessible. Follow organizational digital-security practices, including screen locks, encryption, and safe handling of devices containing sensitive material.
- **Use communication and check-in procedures.** Establish clear plans for tracking crew locations, check-in times, and communication options if networks become overloaded. Encourage crews to trust their instincts. If they feel unsafe, they should move or end the assignment.



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