

Guidelines for Traditional Camera Cars and Process Trailers

ACTSAFE SAFETY BULLETIN #8

This bulletin provides guidelines for working safely on or around traditional camera cars (insert cars) and process trailers. A *traditional camera car* is a self-propelled vehicle that is specifically engineered for mounting and operating cameras and other equipment to film from a moving or stationary vehicle. A *process trailer* is a platform towed by a camera car and designed to carry what's required for the shot (e.g., crew and performers, equipment, or another vehicle). When camera cars and process trailers are used together, they're commonly referred to as **camera car units**.

Drivers have the authority to suspend operation of the camera car or process trailer for any reason that they deem to be unsafe.

A copy of this bulletin should be kept with the camera car or process trailer at all times. Camera cars often work near power lines. For more information, see the [Power Line Distance](#) fact sheet.

These guidelines may not apply to specialized tracking vehicles such as motorized process vehicles and powered camera vehicles (e.g., ATVs, golf carts, snowmobiles, rally cars, camera bikes, and side cars).

WHEN TO USE

Here are some examples of when to consider using a traditional camera car or process trailer:

- Performers will be carrying out actions that may interfere with their ability to drive (e.g., performing complex dialogue).
- The performer's vision will be substantially impaired by:
 - Dust or smoke
 - Spray (e.g., when driving through water or mud)
 - Blinding lights
 - A restrictive covering over the windshield
 - Any other conditions that will substantially restrict the driver's normal vision

- The speed of the vehicle varies from what is normally safe for the driving surface.
- There will be obstacles, difficult terrain, or off-road driving.
- Aircraft will be flying in close proximity.
- Speed or close proximity of two or more vehicles may create conditions that are dangerous to the drivers, performers, passengers, film crew, or other vehicles.

Note: This list doesn't apply to on-camera drivers who are qualified as stunt performers under the UBCP/ACTRA Agreement or other performers who have the expertise to perform the sequence safely.

PRIOR TO OPERATION

Performers and crew riding on the camera car or process trailer must have a safe and secure place to ride. Ensure that safety precautions such as railings, harnesses, and seat belts are in place.



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Rigging and equipment

A qualified person should perform all rigging of the vehicle and equipment, including any changes. This should be done in an area secured for the purpose of rigging and free of known hazards, including other vehicle traffic. Only authorized persons should be in the secured area.

The driver must inspect the vehicle after any rigging changes to ensure they will not adversely affect the safe operation of the vehicle.

All items on the camera car should be properly secured. Extra equipment not being used for the shot should be placed in a follow vehicle.

Passenger and weight allowances

As specified in the *Motor Vehicle Act*, the total weight of the vehicle, passengers, and equipment must not exceed the manufacturer's maximum gross vehicle weight rating (GVWR) or the combined maximum rating of the tires supporting each axle.

Generally, there should be no more than nine people on a camera car or process trailer, including the driver. This does not include the performers in the picture vehicle. Vehicles differ, though, so you should always follow the manufacturer's guidelines.

Any vehicle or camera platform towed by a camera car is considered part of the camera car and subject to the nine-person limit and all the other requirements described in this bulletin. Towing combinations don't increase the weight or passenger allowances.

The performance, operation, and capacity of a camera car will vary when all factors are taken into consideration. The camera car driver has the authority to make the final determination regarding the operation of the camera car.

Only personnel absolutely required to perform work during the rehearsals and the actual shot sequences should be on the camera car unit. The 1st AD should consult with the camera car driver, key grip, and any other necessary department heads to determine who those people are. Consider the following factors:

- Weather during the shot sequence
- Driving surface (e.g., concrete, asphalt, decomposed granite, compacted dirt)
- Surface condition (e.g., wet, oily, broken, loose debris, washboard)
- Route configuration (e.g., straight, curved, "S" curved; level, inclined, crown)
- Topography (e.g., flat, hilly, mountainous, urban or rural)
- Vehicle speed
- Visibility (e.g., trees, fog, smoke, lighting, structures, rigging, overhead obstructions)
- Overhead and side obstructions (e.g., power lines, tree limbs, overpasses, traffic signals)
- Equipment rigging (e.g., multiple cameras, camera lights)
- Escape routes and contingency plans

Scouting locations

Camera car drivers and stunt coordinators should be included in technical scouting of locations any time camera car units are going to be used.

Inspections

Make sure camera car units are roadworthy, suitably maintained, and mechanically inspected at the start of each day — and more often, if necessary. If an item doesn't pass the required inspection, it must be repaired by a qualified person before being used.

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SAFETY MEETINGS

The 1st AD, stunt coordinator, and drivers should hold shot-specific car safety meetings. Everybody should attend these meetings, especially if they will be in, on, or near the camera car unit (including police escorts, if applicable).

Clear communication channels and protocols should be established and discussed in all safety meetings. Discuss the shot sequence and route, including any stunt action, and the protocols for aborting the sequence.

Include information on vehicle speed, number and proximity of other vehicles, crew and camera placement, background performers, and props.

Discuss if the shot will include slower travel speeds or a convoy of safety buffer vehicles for a cushion zone.

Inform everyone of the signalling protocol being used by the driver. For example, two short taps of the horn generally means the vehicle is about to move, and one short tap means it's safe to get off the camera car. Alternatively, the driver might use an onboard PA system.

If there are changes in the choreography or personnel involved in the shot, hold a safety meeting to ensure everyone involved is aware of the changes.

OPERATION

If the camera car's engine is running, performers and crew should not walk between the car and any vehicle it is towing, or enter or exit the vehicle unless the driver indicates that it is safe to do so.

If the camera car is in motion, performers and crew should not get on or off it or be on the tow bar.

The 1st AD, camera car driver, stunt coordinator, and any other vehicle drivers, including road-control authorities, should all be on the same walkie-talkie channel.

Personnel

All personnel on or in the camera car unit should be harnessed, belted, or safetied in. Anyone riding on the camera car unit should protect against changes

in speed or direction by doing the following:

- Remain seated at all times while the car is moving.
- Place both feet on the floor or on a footrest.
- Ride only in a protected, safe, and secure area on the camera car.
- Stay alert. Expect the unexpected.

Equipment

Equipment such as camera dollies, boom arms, lighting fixtures, grip equipment, or special effects equipment must be secured to the vehicle or have a safety strap. Extra equipment not being used for the shot in progress should be placed in a follow vehicle.

RELATED RESOURCES

- [Addendum A: Camera Cranes on Vehicles](#) (safety bulletin)
- [Stunts](#) (safety bulletin)
- [Power Line Distance](#) (fact sheet)



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REGULATORY REFERENCES

For more information on requirements, see the following sections of the Occupational Health and Safety Regulation and its associated guidelines:

- [Section 4.3, Safe machinery and equipment](#)

You can find searchable versions of the Regulation and the guidelines at www.worksafebc.com

Actsafe Safety Association

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