

Topic no 57

Recce or Scouting

Remote surveys (recce)

Fundamentally, there are two types of shooting conditions: at your *base* and *on location*. Your *base* is wherever you normally shoot. It may be a studio, theater, room, or even a stadium. The base is where you know exactly what facilities are available (equipment, supplies, and scenery), where things are, the amount of room available, and so on. If you need to supplement what is there, you can usually do so easily.

The amount of detail needed about a location varies with the type and style of the production. Information that may seem trivial at the time can prove valuable later in the production process. Location sites can be interiors, covered exteriors, or open-air sites. Each has its own problems.

Sketches

- Prepare rough maps of route to site that can ultimately be distributed to the crew and talent (includes distance, travel time).
- Prepare a rough layout of the site (room plan, etc.).
- Outline anticipated camera location(s).
- Designate parking locations for truck (if needed) and staff vehicles.

Contact & Schedule

- Get location contact information from primary and secondary location
- Information contacts, site custodian, electrician, engineer, and security; this includes office and cell phones as well as e-mail.
- If access credentials are required for the site, obtain the procedure and contact information.
- Obtain the event schedule (if one exists), and find out if there are rehearsals that you can attend.

Camera Locations

- Check around the location for the best camera angles.
- What type of camera mount will be required (tripod, Steadicam, etc.)?
- If a multi-camera production, cable runs must be measured to ensure that there is enough camera cable available.
- What lens will be required on the camera at each location to obtain the needed shot?
- Are there any obstructions or distractions (e.g., large signs, reflections)?
- Do you anticipate any obvious problems in shooting? Anything dangerous?

Lighting

- Will the production be shot in daylight? How will the light change through- out the day?
Does the daylight need to be augmented with reflectors or lights?
- Will the production be shot in artificial light? (If so, will you use theirs, yours, or a combination of the two?) Will they be on at the time you are shooting?
- What are your estimates for the number of lamps, positions, power needed, supplies, and cabling required?

Audio

- What type of microphones will be needed?
- Any potential problems with acoustics (such as a strong wind rumble)?
- Any extraneous sounds (elevators, phones, heating/air conditioning, machinery, children, aircraft, birds, etc.)?
- Required microphone cable lengths must be determined. Safety
- Are there any safety issues that you need to be aware of?

Power

- What level of power is available, and what type of power will you need? This will differ greatly between single-camera and multi-camera production.
- What type of power connectors are required?

Communications

- Are radios needed? How many?
- How many cell phones are needed?
- If it is a multi-camera production, what type of intercom and how many headsets are required?

Logistics

- Is there easy access to the location? At any time, or at certain times only? Are there any traffic problems? What kind of transportation is needed for talent and crew?
- What kind of catering is needed? How many meals? How many people?
- Are accommodations needed (where, when, how many)?
- If the weather is bad, are there alternative positions/locations available?
- Has a phone number list been prepared for police, fire, doctor, hotel, and local (delivery) restaurants?
- What kind of first-aid services need to be available? (Is a first-aid kit sufficient, or does an ambulance need to be on-site?)
- Is location access restricted? Do you need to get permission (or keys) to enter the site? From whom?
- What insurance is needed (against damage or injury)?

Security

- Are local police required to handle crowds or just the public in general?
- What arrangements need to be made for security of personal items, equipment, props, etc.)?
- Do streets need to be blocked?

A location is anywhere away from your normal shooting site. It may just be outside the building or way out in the country. It could be in a vehicle, down in a mine, or in someone's home. Your main concern when shooting away from your base is to find out what you are going to deal with in advance. It is important to be prepared. The preliminary visit to a location is generally called a remote survey, site survey, or location survey. It can be anything from a quick look around to a detailed survey of the site. What you find during the survey may influence the planned production treatment.