

ELECTRICAL SAFETY AT FILMING & EVENTS



Electrical safety and the law

Electricity is powerful and often the cause of fires, injuries and even death. At events the risks associated with electricity are greater because of the temporary nature of the distribution system. A lack of adequate mechanical protection, varying demands, unpredictable weather and unusual loads can all affect the effectiveness of protection methods used.

Health and Safety law is well established in respect of electrical safety. It requires the working environment to be electrically safe (Electricity at Work Regulations 1989; 'EaWR') and that the equipment used in the workplace is electrically safe as well (Provision and Use of Work Equipment Regulations 1998, 'PUWER'). Both apply without exception to temporary events including film and TV location work, festivals, outdoor spectacles such as New Year's Eve events and so on.

Routes to compliance

The EaWR requires electrical systems to be designed and installed by competent people and for it to protect against the hazards that electricity can create. In the UK the accepted method of ensuring that systems are designed effectively and will provide adequate protection is to follow the requirements specified in British Standard BS 7671, better known as the IET Wiring Regulations, currently in its 17th edition (and often referred to as such).

BS 7671 does (depending on the work) invoke the use of other standards which have to be used alongside it. For temporary power systems at events, it requires BS 7909 to be complied with. This deals specifically with the setting up, management and some related technical issues for the temporary electrical systems.



Verification of systems

Venue owners and local authorities have a duty to ensure their employees and the public (if present) are kept safe from electrical hazards. Depending on the venue for an event, there may also be insurance or licensing requirements too.

BS 7909 requires all events to appoint a 'Senior Person Responsible' (SPR) who will oversee and manage all the electrical safety at an event. They will be responsible for ensuring the electrical hazards are identified and the risks managed to an acceptable level. In order to provide this assurance to others, BS 7909 requires that the system is checked and tested; it has appropriate completion certificates for the SPR to use to provide such verification to the event management.

Film Officers may request a copy of the completion certificates for their own records.

The local authority is keen to ensure it protects its staff and the public and so if any of the following apply, you must comply with BS 7909:

- Filming at a council location using a local supply or stand-alone generator.
- Filming at a privately owned property where a generator is parked on council land or the public highway or any part of the temporary electrical distribution is on council land.
- Unit base parking on council owned land where temporary electrical systems are installed.

In advance of the event/filming we will expect the following from event organisers/productions:

- Nominate a SPR to oversee and manage the electrical safety during filming and provide us with their details. This helps to ensure that BS 7909 is considered at an early stage and if we have specific electrical queries we can raise them with the appropriate person.
- If after reading this document you are unsure of the requirements of BS 7909 you should request information from your production's safety officer.
- Electrical risk assessment and method statement specifically for the hazards envisaged on the event, not a generic electrical safety assessment.

On the day of the event/filming:

- Provide the Film office with a copy of the completed electrical completion certificate in accordance with BS 7909 when the event is up and running. If members of the public have access to areas being used then it would be wise for this certificate to be completed before the public are allowed access. This certificate should be photographed or scanned and emailed through to the Richmond Film office at filmrichmond@richmond.gov.uk. This certificate can only be completed on the day of the event/filming when the electrical system is set up.
- If filming is taking place at a number of different locations over the course of a day, a new completion certificate will probably be required for each location.
- Compliance with BS 7909 is a requirement of the local authority, as well as a condition of our contract if you are filming at a council location. Failure to produce this certificate may jeopardise your shoot.