



# Production Assistant Helper Guide

*Are you new to the film industry?*

This guide will give you some of the basics you should know before working on set.

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## **Introduction**

The Directors Guild of Canada, British Columbia (DGC BC) is a labour organization that represents key creative and logistical personnel in the film industry. The DGC BC Collective Agreement covers the Director, Production/Unit Manager, Assistant Directors, location Department and production Assistants (PA). As the DGC BC is a membership-based organization, preference of engagement is always given to Members first.

The Locations Department relies on a number of Production Assistant Helpers (PA Helpers) to assist with a variety of duties when a production shoots “on location” or in the studio. For those who have not worked in the industry, this document provides an important overview of the Locations Department expectations.

The DGC BC does not hire for productions; they hire directly for themselves. **You can apply to work as a PA Helper** by sending your resume to the Productions email addresses listed in the [Production List](#) on the DGC BC website. In the subject line of your email, you can add “ATTN: Location Department” as they are the department to hire PAs!

### **Respectful Workplace**

The DGC BC endorses a Respectful Workplace environment. All Members and non-Members working under the DGC BC Collective Agreement are entitled the protections outlined on our website regarding respectful workplaces. Please familiarize yourself with your rights and responsibilities in helping to promote a workplace that is free from bullying, harassment and/or discrimination. <https://www.dgc.ca/en/british-columbia/about-us/respectful-workplace>

### **Permittee Logbook Holder Program**

If you would like to pursue a career in any of the job categories the DGC BC covers, you must be a Member (with the exception of PA Helper); in order to become a Member, you must join the Permittee Logbook Holder Program. The Permittee Logbook Holder Program is used to work towards Associate Membership within the Directors Guild of Canada and is the first step that must be completed to obtain Associate Membership.

## **DGC BC Categories**

The Directors Guild of Canada, British Columbia District Council covers the following categories:

- Director (DIR)
- 2<sup>nd</sup> Unit Director
- Production Manager (PM) \*
- Unit Manager (UM)
- 1<sup>st</sup> Assistant Director (1<sup>st</sup> AD) \*
- 2<sup>nd</sup> Assistant Director (2<sup>nd</sup> AD)
- 3<sup>rd</sup> Assistant Director (3<sup>rd</sup> AD)
- Additional Assistant Director – Background Coordinator (AAD-BKC)
- Trainee Assistant Director (TAD)
- Location Manager (LM) \*
- Assistant Location Manager (ALM)
- Location Scout (LS)
- Trainee Assistant Location Manager (TAL)
- Production Assistant (PA)

\* denotes the head of the department

## **Supervisor's Expectations**

When you're working on set, your supervisor will have some expectations from you.

- Work safely
- Have a great attitude
- Dress appropriately for all conditions
- Be responsible, reliable, on time, and properly equipped
- Be professional and adaptable to all personality types
- Be able to work well under pressure
- Demonstrate strong public relation skills
- Be organized
- Be attentive and alert – foresee problems and pay attention to those around you.
- Be good at multi-tasking
- Ask questions when unclear

## **Job Search**

The DGC BC will not assist with your search for work. However, an updated [Production List](#) is published every Friday. The list is a great reference tool as it provides the names of productions currently shooting. PA Helpers are encouraged to email their resumes to the attention of the Locations Department. The Production List can be referenced through website [www.dgcbc.com](http://www.dgcbc.com). Please keep documented proof of days worked in the form of pay stubs, since that will serve as the only proof of days worked.

## **PA Helper Duties**

Below, you will find outlines of some of the tasks that you may be asked to do as a PA helper. Make sure you are always following the instructions of your ALM.

### **Crowd Control:**

While on location, you may be asked to stop, re-route or otherwise control pedestrian traffic. While dealing directly with the public, use caution and be polite at all times.

Instead of saying “you can’t”, offer alternatives and information about why there is a delay or detour. Make sure you stop pedestrian traffic as soon as the 1st AD calls “Stand by” or “Lock it up” as per your instructions. If, during that time, somebody wants to get by, ask them if they could wait for a few minutes or suggest a detour. The Film Industry is dependent on the cooperation and goodwill of the public so ensure you remain professional and courteous at all times.

### **Firewatch:**

At any time that the camera or lights are unattended, you may be asked to watch over the equipment to prevent theft. You may also be asked to maintain a “hot set”, which means that the set must be maintained *exactly* as it was during the last shot. It is your responsibility to inform any crew or cast attempting to enter the set area that they are entering a hot set. Be polite and if someone insists on entering, get their name and, if possible, notify the superior who provided the hot set instructions.

### **Crew Park:**

When the crew first begins to arrive at the location, you may be asked to supervise the crew parking lot. Make sure you wear a reflective vest so that you are easily recognized as a crewmember. You may be asked to hand out dash cards to the cast or crew that will identify the car as belonging to that particular film unit. If the company has rented the entire lot for the day, it is your responsibility to inform other drivers that the lot is not available. Just like Crowd Control,

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remain professional and courteous at all times and try to offer alternatives rather than telling people that they cannot park there.

### **“Papering” A Neighbourhood:**

Prior to a film unit going into a neighbourhood for filming, you may be asked to drop letters off to offices, businesses and homes in the area. Remember to maintain a professional attitude and appearance when dealing directly with the public.

These letters, which are generally written by the Location Manager, inform people of the production company name, and provide the dates and times of interruptions; they also indicate who to contact if questions or problems arise. The letter may also warn of anything that may particularly alarm locals, this includes events such as explosions, stunts and other actions that could be misinterpreted as an emergency. Make sure you are papering your assigned neighbourhood thoroughly. Film units can be quite disruptive, and failing to properly inform the neighbourhood can cause serious problems for the entire crew.

### **Parking the Unit:**

When the trucks and mobile units begin to arrive on a set, you may be asked to coordinate the parking of these vehicles. Make sure you are parking the vehicles as per your ALM’s instructions. Generally, the vehicles that should be parked the closest to set are: The Camera Truck, Grip and Electrics Truck, Props and Craft Service trucks. The unit vehicles, which are parked slightly farther away are: The Makeup, Hair and Wardrobe units, Honey wagons, Mobile Dressing Rooms and Catering. Your ALM will let you know about any special unit parking requirements on each production. Use your discretion and report to a superior any problems. Wear a reflective vest, have a stop/slow paddle nearby and watch out for low-hanging wires, trees and other hazards.

### **Clean-Up:**

When the unit leaves a location, you may be asked to do the clean-up. This involves sweeping area, picking up traffic cones, barricades and things left behind, or removing things such as signage, masking tape, barrier tape, and floor/or wall coverings.

The General rule is to leave the location in a better condition than when it was found. Make sure you are cleaning up throughout the day; this involves sweeping the area of garbage and debris, and emptying butt cans (metal cans for cigarette butts).

### **Traffic Control:**

Let the ALM know if you hold a valid ticket. **Do not do traffic control duties unless you hold a valid provincial Traffic Control Certificate through the [BCCSA](#).**

If you hold a valid ticket and the unit is filming an action sequence in the street or the unit needs to lock it up, you may be asked to divert or stop traffic. There will most likely be police officers to

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stop vehicular traffic if any city streets are being shut down. The same rules of conduct for crowd control apply here.

## **First Day of Work**

No one expects you to be fully trained on your first day so make sure you asking questions, being receptive to criticism, and watching those around you.

It is also important to understand that no matter which task you are assigned, you should always put a high priority on safety and communication.

Never confuse “responsibility” with “authority”. While doing clean up at a location, it may appear to you that what you are doing does not entail a great deal of responsibility, but you are fulfilling a vital function. If, for instance, you are working on location at a unique mansion in Shaughnessy and the location is left with cigarette butts and other garbage in the area, the location owner may never allow filming there again. The film community could potentially lose a one-of-a-kind location indefinitely.

## **Mandatory Paperwork (Start Pack)**

This paperwork is required for every production and must be signed by you and your supervisor. [Here you can watch a video on how to fill in your Start Pack](#). Ask your supervisor for a start pack and be sure that it includes the following documents:

- **Deal Memo** – Also called “Schedule A-2”, it is your contract with the production company.
- **Permit Request Form** – Also called “Schedule B-1”, it is your work permit request with the union.
- **Time Sheet** – Be sure to fill in your correct start time, lunch break, and wrap time for payroll purposes.
- **Start Slip** – Payroll companies require this completed form in order to issue your pay cheque. Please ensure that all requested information is provided.
- **Mileage/Expense Forms** – To be completed whenever you incur extra expenses that are pre-authorized by your supervisor, including mileage driven outside the Studio Zone and/or while using your vehicle for business purposes. Always keep accurate mileage records, receipts, etc.

## **Residency Documentation**

It has come to the attention of the DGC BC that productions have been experiencing difficulty in obtaining BC residency documents from Employees. These documents are required by productions in order to access federal and provincial labour tax credits.

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### **Requirement to Provide Documentation**

Under Article 27.11 of the DGC BC Collective Agreement, Employees are required to provide Canadian and Provincial residency information sufficient to ensure that the production company is eligible to receive federal and provincial incentives, including labour tax credits. The Personal Information and Privacy Act apply to the collection, use and disclosure of this information.

### **Importance of Tax Credits**

As an Employee working in a DGC-represented category, your wages and working conditions are protected by the provisions of the Collective Agreement. You are also required to uphold those same provisions. Failure to provide residency documentation is not only a violation of the agreement, but it also compromises a vital incentive that is instrumental in keeping production coming to our province.

### **Condition of Employment**

Although an Employer cannot withhold pay for failure to provide residency documentation, providing those documents can be a condition of employment. In other words, the Employer retains the right to not hire you or allow you to commence work on a production if you do not provide sufficient residency documentation.

### **What You Can Do: Best Practices**

Always have extra copies of your residency documentation at home and bring them with you on your first day on a production to submit with your start pack. If you are typically a day call, make sure you have enough copies at the beginning of the week to cover potential employment on multiple shows. If you are providing a CRA Notice of Assessment, black out your income information.

### **Types of Residency Documentation**

The following page lists the types of residency documentation that we understand to be sufficient and acceptable proof of residency. If you do not currently possess any of these documents to provide to an Employer, we strongly encourage you to obtain them to maximize your employment opportunities.

### **Questions**

As always, if you have any questions about this or any other Collective Agreement issues, don't hesitate to call Rob Larson or Alexis Hinde at the Guild office at 604-688-2976.

### **Examples of Proof of Residency Documentation:**

#### Primary – For the relevant year:

- Notice of Assessment (Recommend service provider delete the income information). If this is submitted, no further documents are required
- If no Notice of Assessment is available, then two documents from Secondary list (A), or a combination of one document from list (A) and two from list (B):

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### Secondary (A)

- BC Medical Services Plan billing
- Lease Agreement with rent receipts
- Terasen gas billing
- BC Hydro billing
- Telephone billing
- TV service provider billing

### Secondary (B)

- Copies of information slips (T3, T4, T4E, T5, etc. that were issued)
- ICBC coverage
- Workers Compensation Application
- BC Driver's License
- BC Care Card
- If using a loan-out corporation, a copy of Annual Report filed with Victoria showing name and address of individual as the corporation's officer.

Other documents may be considered on a case-by-case basis.

## **Helpful Tips**

### **When you get a call for work:**

Write down the details (time, place, parking arrangements, approximate length of call, name of contact, ALM's cell number, etc.) Look up the address on a map. Cancel any previous engagements for that day, and arrive at least 15 minutes early. You should be notified by your ALM whether you are working an 8hr, or 15hr day prior to your shift starting. Please keep in mind that you may be asked to stay longer depending on the Production's needs.

### **Dress Code:**

As a PA you are often on the front lines of communication with the public, and therefore representing the Production Company. Make sure your dress is both appropriate and comfortable.

You should always bring clothing with you for any type of weather, as you may be required to work outside in an unsheltered area for fifteen hours or more. Typical of the West Coast, the day could start sunny and warm, and end in a downpour. It is recommended that you have the following items accessible at all times:

- Waterproof coat, pants, hat
- Low-heeled, waterproof, comfortable boots
- Second pair of boots
- Second pair of socks



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- Extra sweaters
- Shorts or light pants
- Work gloves
- Extra warm gloves

Good quality raingear and footgear can be extremely beneficial. **Pro Tip:** If you know you are going to be working near set do not wear bright clothing as it can reflect in windows and on metallic surfaces interfering with the shot.

**Do not engage with confrontational crew members or members of the public.** This can put you in a dangerous situation. Instead, talk to or radio your ALM or LM (or AD if necessary) to assist you – take the crew member’s name if possible. Never try to handle this type of situation on your own and always use professional and courteous language.

**Keep it professional.** Make sure you are keeping yourself busy, and stay off your phone. Don’t use this as an opportunity to ask actors for their autographs.

**Never leave the post you are assigned.** Without informing the ALM, unless you are in immediate danger.

**Stay alert.** Watch for possible problems, inform the right people, and listen to your radio.

**Stay calm.** Film sets are often stressful and hectic for all crew members. You can counteract this by completing your tasks accurately, and efficiently.

**Wear or use the safety gear you are issued.** Listen and abide by safety meetings.

**Don’t touch, move, or help carry equipment, set dec, props etc. without asking** (or being asked to.) If you are unsure, check with your ALM.

## **The Do’s and Don’ts for Radio and Set Etiquette**

While on set, the crew will communicate through a radio (walkie). Please ask your supervisor for a quick tutorial on how your walkie works if you are unsure.

- **DO** Listen to your radio, observe your surroundings, and be aware of the camera and what it sees.
- **DO** Follow reasonable orders, and ask questions if you don’t understand.
- **DO** Speak clearly and calmly on the radio and be brief with your messages.
- **DO** Remember the whole crew can hear what you say on a radio.
- **DO** Be polite, friendly, helpful, and use common sense.
- **DO** Explain things to the public so that they may be more cooperative.

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- **DO** Warn people of potential dangers.
- **DO** Try to clean up a mess before you are asked.
  
- **DON'T** Swear on the radio. *This is a Federal (DOC) violation.*
- **DON'T** Use the radio if the person is near enough to talk to directly.
- **DON'T** Keep calling someone repeatedly on the radio, (they are probably busy).
- **DON'T** Borrow or move equipment without permission.
- **DON'T** Stand in front of the camera or lights unless asked.
- **DON'T** Talk, smoke, or allow pager/cell/watch alarm/camera flash to go off on set.
- **DON'T** Tolerate discrimination or harassment.
- **DON'T** Complain about long hours, bad weather or boredom.
- **DON'T** Leave your position without informing your supervisor.
- **DON'T** Ask when you will be wrapped.

## Terminology

*\*Please note this can vary team to team.*

- **10-1:** “Going to the honey wagon”; a trip to the bathroom.
- **Abby Shot:** 2nd to last shot of the day.
- **Action:** Director’s cue for the actors and/or action to begin.
- **Back to First Marks:** Instruction for actors/extras to return to their first positions; also referred to as “Back to Ones.”
- **Background:** Cue for extras and any other background action elements to begin their action.
- **Butt Sweep:** Sweep the site, including around unit trucks and entrances.
- **Butt Cans:** Metal cans for cigarette butt disposal.
- **Call Time:** The time you must be on set or location, ready to work.
- **Circus:** Makeup, Hair and Wardrobe Trucks, Honey wagons, Mobile Dressing Rooms and Catering.
- **“We’re on the Move”:** This means that the entire unit is finished at that location and is about to move to the next location.
- **Cut:** The call to stop the action. Before releasing any lock-up make sure you hear cut from the 1<sup>st</sup> AD.
- **Day for Night:** Using special camera lenses, lighting and film stock to create a night look during the day.
- **Exterior:** Outdoor shot
- **Extras:** Performers hired to provide background action; also known as the “background performers”.
- **Genny:** The generator.

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- **Lift:** A raising platform/crane used mainly for high angle shots and lighting for exterior night shots.
- **Going Again:** Repeat the same shot.
- **Honeywagon:** Washroom truck.
- **Hot Set:** The set is ready for shooting and must remain exactly as is for continuity (high priority).
- **Interior:** Indoor shot.
- **Lock It Up:** “Be quiet and get ready for cameras to roll”; a cue for PAs to stop vehicle or pedestrian traffic and be alert for interfering noises.
- **MOS:** Mute On Screen. Camera is rolling but not recording sound.
- **Pick-Up:** Re-filming part of a scene from a specific point in the action.
- **Picture’s up:** Rehearsal is complete; cameras will roll on the next action.
- **Roll Camera:** Cue to the camera operator to begin rolling film.
- **Roll Sound:** Cue to the sound mixer to begin recording sound.
- **Rolling:** Film and sound are rolling, action is about to begin. Be quiet and still.
- **Room Tone:** Recording dead air (no dialogue) for matching sound ambience during post-production. Be quiet and still.
- **Speed/Sound Speed:** Response heard from Sound Mixer after “Roll Sound”, meaning that the machine is up to speed.
- **Stand By:** Hold your positions for a temporary delay, and be prepared for rolling.
- **Star Wagon:** Mobile dressing room for actors
- **Tow Shot:** A sequence where a picture car is towed by a camera truck for traveling car scene.
- **Turn Around:** Reversing the camera angle 180 degrees. This is not to be confused with crew turnaround, which is the required rest period between workdays.
- **What’s your 20?:** “Where are you?”
- **Wild Track:** Recording specific dialogue or sounds without the camera rolling, for editing purposes; also “wild lines.”
- **Window Shot:** Last shot before wrap, can also be called the “Martini Shot”.
- **Wrap:** The end of the shooting day.

## **Attitude**

Keep yourself as informed as possible. If you are given instructions that you don’t understand, ask for clarification.

Supervisors search for PA Helpers who are good-natured, intelligent, interested, observant and able to maintain a good attitude while standing in the rain, cleaning up garbage, dealing with the public or guarding a parking lot for hours. Know that you have the right to refuse unsafe work,

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for example: you shall never be required to work alone in supervising a parking lot or area that is not within both visual and auditory distance of the shooting unit. (Article 22.12 (b))

Always remain observant of possible safety hazards. For example, if the unit is filming a car chase scene through an alleyway and you notice an unguarded doorway onto the alleyway, you should inform your department head immediately. Someone could step out of that doorway at exactly the wrong time. Always use common sense.

You must be very careful of what you say and how you respond to the public. Always speak respectfully, because you never know who you might be speaking to. Also, you most likely signed an NDA (Non-Disclosure Agreement) when you were filling out your start pack. Never provide the public with details on what or who is being filmed.

Make sure you are making connections with the team, especially your direct supervisors (as these people will be the ones to hire you back). You can do this by being willing to follow instructions carefully, maintaining a positive attitude, and by finding helpful tasks to keep yourself busy.

## **Pay Scale**

**Work Day:** The current workday is eight (8) or fifteen (15) hours, and all minimum pay rates are based on this number. Fringes are calculated on your gross pay:

**Overtime:** For each hour worked in excess of fifteen (15) hours, PAs are paid at two and a half times (2 ½x) the employees hourly base. For each hour worked in excess of eighteen (18) hours, PAs are paid at three times (3x) the employee's hourly base rate. (Note: you must inform your supervisor and be given authorization prior to entering overtime hours).

**Per Diem:** This is the monetary allowance for work on Distant Location, when you are unable to return home after each workday. The Production Company must supply reasonable single occupancy accommodation and \$65 per day for meal expenses. The Company may provide meals on Distant Location, thereby reducing the meal allowance by \$14.50 for breakfast, \$20.50 for lunch and \$30 for dinner.

**Turnaround:** Currently, DGC BC Members are required to have a minimum of nine (9) hours rest from the Member's wrap time and the Member's call time the next day. If the appropriate rest period is not provided, each hour worked during the rest period shall be paid at three times (3X) the Employee's Hourly Base Rate. When the rest period is encroached by one-half (½) hour or less, there shall be a payment of one-half (½) hour of turnaround premium. If the rest period is encroached by more than one-half (½) hour the turnaround premium shall be

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computed in one-tenth (1/10) of an hour increments for the encroached period. This provision does not apply to Directors.

**Mileage:** is only applicable if you incur extra expenses that are pre-authorized by your supervisor (could include travel outside the studio zone and/or while using your vehicle for business purposes.) Always keep accurate mileage records, receipts, etc.

Reimbursement is \$30.00 per day or ¢35 cents per kilometer as pre-authorized by your supervisor (LM).

## **Payroll Deductions**

CPP, UI, Income Tax plus DGC BC Permit Fees and Working Dues

Based on your gross wages, CPP, Income Tax and Unemployment Insurance will be deducted from your pay.

As you are not a DGC Member, a \$5.00 permit fee, which is owed for each day worked on a DGC BC signatory production, will be deducted from your wages and remitted to the Guild. Working dues in the amount of 2% of your gross wages will also be also deducted for remittance to the Guild.

## **Creative BC – Code of Conduct**

When filming anywhere the general public may be affected by production activities, proper notification is to be provided to those directly affected. You can view the full Code of Conduct on [Creative BC's webpage here](#).

In summary:

### **General Practices**

- All productions are expected to have and abide by their employer's COVID-19 safety plan and protocols.
- Pedestrians should always be treated with courtesy and not be obstructed at any time unless stipulated in the permit.
- Removing or cutting signs or plants from any public or private location is not allowed.

### **Vehicles**

- Cast and crew vehicles are not covered by the location-filming permit and must use designated parking areas only.
- Vehicles shall not display signs, posters or pictures that the public may find offensive or objectionable (i.e. material containing vulgar language or sexual content).
- Crew cannot move a private vehicle to accommodate filming or parking, without permission of the owner. If a vehicle is parked in a restricted area, the appropriate authority will remove it.

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### **Cast and Crew**

- Cannot trespass on private property. They must remain within the boundaries of the property that has been permitted for filming.
- Shall wear appropriate clothing – for example, T-shirts with offensive slogans are not acceptable – and comply with appropriate employee safety regulations.
- Failure to comply can result in disciplinary action by the government authority, Production Company, union, guild or association.

Thank you for honouring this Code of Conduct.

## **Permittee Logbook Holder Program**

After you start working on DGC BC Productions, the DGC BC has a Permittee Logbook Holder Program. If you would like to pursue a career in any of the job categories the DGC BC covers, you must be a Member (with the exception of PA Helper); in order to become a Member, you must join the Permittee Logbook Holder Program. The Permittee Logbook Holder Program is used to work towards Associate Membership within the Directors Guild of Canada and is the first step that must be completed to obtain Associate Membership.

### *What is a Permittee Logbook Holder?*

Permittee Logbook Holders are Non-Members registered in the Permittee Logbook Holder Program. Being a Permittee Logbook Holder means an individual has taken the pre-requisite courses to join the Program and are working their way towards Associate Membership.

Completion of the DGC BC Permittee Logbook Holder Program is **required** to work towards Associate Membership within the Directors Guild of Canada, BC and is the first step that must be completed to obtain Membership as a PA.

[Click here to learn more about the Permittee Logbook Holder Program.](#)