



IFJ Safety Guidelines for Covering Demonstrations and Civil Unrest

Preparation

1. Plan in advance. Know what to expect. Know how to get assistance. Know where the safe areas are.
2. Establish pre-arranged contact points with the rest of your team (photographer, camera operator, producer, etc.) if you are separating.
3. Bring a cellular phone and preferably a satellite phone with emergency numbers pre-set for speed dialing. This will facilitate communication with office and colleagues on the ground.
4. Carry first aid kits and learn how to use them.
5. Bring eye protection such as swimming goggles, industrial eye protection, shatterproof glasses, face shields or gas mask.
6. Wear loose natural fabric clothing as this will not burn as readily as synthetic ones; remember there is always the possibility of gasoline bombs being exploded.
7. Wear color distinctive clothing from police forces and army.
8. Wear comfortable and good shoes. Practical and tightly laced shoes are necessary.
9. Carry a small backpack with enough food and water to last for a day in case you are unable to get out of the area. Backpack can be used as shield against rubber bullets, water cannons and rocks. Make sure the backpack has at least a strap around the chest and one around the waist in case you need to run for safety.
10. Bring your prescription/non-prescription medication in case you are at risk. Take in original, labelled containers from pharmacy.

At the Scene

11. Always remain in team. Safety is in numbers especially at night. Think about linking together if it gets violent.
12. Always carry press identification but conceal it if it attracts unwarranted attention. Do not introduce yourself as a member of the press, you do not want to agitate the crowd further.

13. Take as few notes as possible not to attract attention. Do not bring notebooks with media logo on it.

14. Always arrange interviews outside of the riot area itself.

15. If you are a reporter you don't have to be in the crowd as long as you can see what's happening. Walk along side of the protesters. People who throw stones usually do that from the middle of the mass of protesters where they can blend back into the crowd.

16. If you are a photographer or camera operator, try to shoot from a higher vantage point

17. Run if you see policemen running towards you in riot gear, otherwise, they will treat you as one of the protesters.

18. Do not pick anything up. Leave everything that flies your way on the ground. If you pick up a rock the protesters have thrown, you can get arrested because it might look as if you are going to throw it. If you pick a tear gas canister, you will badly burn your hand.

19. Do not resist arrest. When being arrested at a protest, you'll be taken to a holding area and have to wait for processing due to the massive amount of arrests. Identify yourself in the holding area, where the police officers in charge are more relaxed.

During Riots

20. Stay calm and focused when things get most intense. React to danger or warning signs.

21. Be prepared to run away from smoke, fire, police and flying objects in general. Do all this while your head is down.

22. Tear gas. Position yourself upwind if there is a possibility that tear gas will be used. If you are hit by tear gas, run away from police as fast as you can while breathing as little as you can. Once you are safe, take the bottle of water and flush your eyes. It will still hurt but not nearly as bad as it does when you leave it in. People with asthma, respiratory problems or infections, pregnant women, anyone ill or with a poor immune system, seizure disorders, eye infections, contact lens wearers should avoid tear gas by all means.

23. If you wear contact lenses, the irritating gases will get trap between the lens and the eye and may increase the amount of damage and irritation. Always prefer glasses.

24. Rubber bullets. This is what the police use most of the time. If you can't run or duck behind something, turn your back against the police, get down on your knees, keep your head down and protect your face. Your backpack can serve as a cover. If you are worried about your back, you can wear motorbike back protector as long as you can run with it.

25. Water cannon. Even though these are easy to spot, it can happen that you get caught. If that's happen, turn around, cower down, close your eyes and make a sort of tent in front of your nose and mouth so that you have air left. Be aware that you can be swept away by the water.

26. Work with the team and keep a mental map of your escape route if things turn bad.

27. Have an immediate newsroom debriefing after the coverage to extract lessons from the coverage.

Suggested Equipment

28. 30L Rucksack Containing:

1. Baseball Bump cap (Head Protection in style of Baseball Cap)
2. Standard Eye shields
3. Diving Style Goggles (Protection against Tear Gas)
4. 3M 4251 Respirator (Protection against Tear gas as well as general dust particles)
5. Personal First Aid Kit
6. Knee Pads
7. Small Fire Extinguisher
8. Disposable Ear Plugs

29. Other Considerations:

1. Stab Resistant Vests
2. Flame Retardant Spray
3. Flame retardant Underwear – Size Dependant
4. Steel Toe Cap Footwear
5. High-Visibility Vest
6. Hands Protection

Advice against Tear Gas

Tear gas is used to control riots, disperse crowds, and subdue individuals. It is intended to cause pain. The effects of the gas usually are temporary. You can expect relief from most of the symptoms within a couple of hours of exposure.

Symptoms of Tear Gas Exposure

- * stinging and burning of the eyes, nose, mouth, and skin
- * excessive tearing
- * blurred vision
- * running nose
- * salivation (drooling)
- * exposed tissue may develop a rash and a chemical burn

- * coughing and difficulty in breathing, including a feeling of choking
- * disorientation and confusion, which may lead to panic
- * intense anger

Tear gas usually is delivered in the form a grenade, which is fitted onto the end of a gun and fired with a blank shotgun cartridge. Therefore, you may hear shots being fired when tear gas is used. Don't assume you are being shot at. Do not panic. Look up when you hear the shot and avoid being in the path of the grenade. Tear gas grenades often explode in the air, delivering a metal container which will spew gas.

This container will be hot, so do not touch it. Do not pick up an unexploded tear gas canister, since it could explode and cause injury. The best defense against tear gas is a gas mask, but if you don't have a mask there are still steps you can take to minimize damage from tear gas. If you think you might encounter tear gas you can place wet/soaked towels around your nose and mouth and add lemon juice or cider vinegar.

Carry a plastic bag with a soaked bandana or paper towel in lemon juice or cider vinegar. Seal it and breathe the fumes if you get exposed to high doses of tear gas. Fumes of chopped-up onions underneath the nose can help.

Don't Panic. You will only start breathing harder and you will inhale more fumes that will cause pain.

Dress in Layers. Once a layer of clothes catches the fumes, you should remove that layer. Try to wear waterproof/rain clothes as a top layer. You can also use garbage bags if desperate.

Goggles are a great thing to have. You can use tight-fitting swim goggles if chemical safety goggles aren't available. Don't wear contact lenses anywhere you might encounter tear gas. If you are wearing contact lenses, immediately remove them. They will be damaged as will anything else you can't wash.

Bring an extra set of basic clothing (including socks). It will make your day if you have been sprayed or gassed. You can wear your clothes again after you wash them, but wash them separately that first time.

If you don't have goggles or any sort of mask, you can breathe the air inside your shirt, since there is less air circulation and therefore a lower concentration of the gas, but that is counterproductive once the fabric becomes saturated.

First aid for eyes is to flush them with sterile saline or water until the stinging starts to abate.

Exposed skin should be washed with soap and water. Breathing difficulties are treated by administering oxygen and in some cases using medication that are used to treat asthma.

Medicated bandages can be used on burns.
Never grab the tear gas canisters; they might burn your skin.
Never wash/rinse tear gas with hot water. Use cold water.

Avoid creams that are oil-based or sunscreens. They will increase the absorption through the skin and will lead to more respiratory consumption as well. Avoid wearing make-up as it will increase the effect of the gas.

Advice in Case of Arrest

- Know your rights: you have the right to remain silent and to be assisted by a competent and independent lawyer of your choice.
- You have the right not to be subjected to torture, intimidation, deceit, other forms of harassment.
- You have the right to be informed of these rights and to be told that anything you say may be used against you in court.
- If you are detained, you must be treated as a human being and you are entitled to due process.

Conduct at Checkpoints and Roadblocks

- Always be polite.
- Avoid confrontation.
- Identify yourself as a journalist.
- If on foot, approach the checkpoint with only necessary papers on hand.
- When in a vehicle, keep windows and doors locked; do not alight unless ordered to do so.
- Never try to film without permission.
- If soldiers or militia manning the checkpoint are hostile or nervous, offer sweets or cigarettes.
- When showing your identity card, let them also see pictures of your wife or children to bring out the more human aspect of your work.
- Let them know that people know where you are and that you are expected back.
- Make them understand that you are not a threat.
- Stay polite but be alert especially for soldiers who seem to be listless and would not look you in the eye.