



The Need of the Hour-

A HEALTH & SAFETY CODE

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A modern welfare state is the one that ensures that its citizens have access to better working conditions and access to the highest attainable standard of health, contributing to living a life in dignity and well-being. It is one of the main prerequisites for qualitative growth of a healthy society. While the organized sector, although it constitutes merely 7% of the total work force of about 400 million in the country is covered under various legislations for social security and other benefits, the remaining 93% in the unorganized sector which also include the entertainment industry of cinema and television remains deprived of all social and economic benefits.

The spotlight and focus of the print media and now television has always been on stars. It is widely believed that the entertainment and media industry are now one of the fastest growing sectors in India. A nonprofessional will be tempted to believe that technicians should be reaping the benefits of this renaissance and laughing all the way to their banks. However, the wide chasm between affluent few and majority living in penury has to be seen to be believed. The workforce consisting of thousands of craftsmen and technicians, it seems, have no access to any social security system. Long and uninterrupted working hours leading to fatigue, illness and in many cases hospitalization; frequent accidents on sets leading to premature death of Lightmen and stunt men have become integral part of working conditions. Some employers assume that stressful working conditions are a necessary evil and those companies must turn up the pressure on workers and set aside health concerns to remain productive and profitable in today's economy. This belief has been challenged by research that reveals that stressful and punishing working conditions are actually associated with increased absenteeism, tardiness-all of which have a negative effect on the bottom line.

It has often been observed even basic safety standards are not observed on the sets. There is so much of cloth around, is there an extinguisher in case a fire breaks out. There seems to be complete lack of concern and regard for Safety. No wonder accidents resulting in the gutting of the sets are a regular feature.

it was crucial after an accident that immediate and proper medical attention is given to the victim. Generally accidents during film shoot result into either loss of limbs or loss of life. When an accident takes place, the injured is rushed to a private hospital. If the injury is serious, they are asked to go to a municipal hospital where again a police case is registered. What is needed today is that norms should be laid, hospitals should be identified and see that there are less of procedural norms. In western countries every *Grip Truck* (lighting equipment van) is equipped with a first aid kit, stretcher, and minor fire dousing equipment.

SAFETY CONTRACTS

No provision is made for safety contracts with the cast and crew before the start of the. The undertaking that producers give is "*If there is any accident when shooting is in progress, I would bear the medical cost.*" Beyond that there isn't any other thing. The approach towards safety standards is very casual. There are so many untrained people ready to do any kind of work and the problem lies there.

Carelessness and insecurity was what resulted in many accidents. Someone else was always lurking behind the scene to take over from those who were not willing to take the risk.

Stunt directors do not have a long working life compared to technicians. As they advance in age, their bodies can no more take the rigors and risks involved in dangerous stunts they perform. Unlike in *Hollywood*, stunt directors do not get to see the script in advance to have any say in the planning of action sequences. For sequences involving falls from high rise buildings there is always the risk of landing somewhere else. In case of grave injury adequate medical facilities are not available on the sets or on outdoor locations.

Except for a few exceptions, film producers don't bother getting the necessary clearance certificates from the fire brigade, railway, traffic police, and other concerned agencies before initializing film shoots

GROUP INSURANCE

Although in the last a *Memorandum of Understanding* that was signed between *the Federation of Western India Cine Employees* and all *Producers bodies*, group insurance was made mandatory, majority of employers do not insure their entire unit and in case of accidents

resulting in death of a worker or technicians have to pay compensation to the family of deceased family.

As mentioned earlier rigorous and punishing schedules to meet deadlines especially those of daily soaps has resulted in several such incidents with unfailing regularity. Following are few incidents involving artists and technicians falling sick on the sets. It is not rare to find actors shooting continuously for 30 days at a stretch with just two holidays in between. They have no time left for any recreation. Indeed the picture is grim!

LIVING ON THE EDGE

- *Saat Phere's **Tara** collapsed on set after working for 14 hours a day weeks on end, but she is propped up and she continues to shoot.*
- ***Saat Phere's** actresses are too ill to run around. So they have been asked to sit and emote, and continue shooting through close ups.*
- *52-hour shifts, 16 hour days-actress **Roshini Chopra** collapsed after a 52 hour schedule.*
- ***Ghazal Rai's** glucose level dropped and she had to be hospitalized on account of complying with rigorous working hours to meet the channel's deadline.*
- ***Neha**, tele-actor, collapsed on the sets of the teleserial **Mamta** after a severe bout of vomiting. The doctor who was called on the sets to check her, blamed it on stress and the gruelling working hours (ranging between 14-15 hours)*
- *Director of teleserial bemoans-"The pace of the story is developing so fast that at times working for 16-17 hours does not seem enough*
- ***Mrinal Deshraj**, TV actor, collapsed on location twice on the same day.*
- ***Rashmi Desai** fainted not on the sets but while shopping in a mall. Gruelling and punishing working hours of television actor result in fatigue, the effects of which could be felt during a rare off day. She had been ignoring her health of late in the midst of long hours on the sets of a serial during the last two months.*
- *Actress **Sonali Kulkarni** collapsed on the sets of a children's film **Brinda** in Hyderabad. A doctor was called on the sets. He took her blood pressure and was shocked to note it was*

next to nothing. She attributed her health scare to shoot continuously for the past few months without adequate sleep and lack of proper diet.

- *Actors **Amit Jain** and **Shama Sikandar** collapsed due to exhaustion on different occasions while shooting for tele serial **Yeh Meri Life Hai** (It's My Life). It is reported that they were propped up by unit members and also administered glucose on the sets.*
- *Director **Apurva Acharya** who had been battling stress on account of long working hours and erratic eating pattern suffered from stomach ailment and had to take injections so that he could go to work.*
- *A 26 year Light man was adjusting the lights on the sets of the serial when he fell head-on from a height of about 15-19 feet. He was rushed to Cooper Hospital, Juhu but was declared dead on admission.*
- *Passion for films led **Nadia Khan**, a young girl in her twenties, to her first trip to India after graduating from *London University* in *Film and Media*. Ironically on the first day of shooting she was knocked down by a speeding local train at *Mahalaxmi Station*.*
- *A fatal cardiac arrest robbed the industry of a young filmmaker who was all set to launch his new film. Death came knocking on the door of **Manoj Punj** who had several box office and critically acclaimed films to his credit. Many attributed to his sudden and shocking demise to stress and working conditions in the industry.*
- *For **Mohd. Jaan**, light man (29 years), an electric shock took the life out of his body. He worked in the industry for 13 years. His family was left without a bread earner.*
- ***Jiyalal Vishwakarma** (43 years), a head carpenter left for heavenly abode when he suffered a *heart attack* on the sets of *Ashtivinayaka Productions* while shooting in Bangkok. h.*
- ***Ashish Kumar Jha**, Light man (29 years) was no exception. Once again *loose wiring*, the very touch of which could send shock waves to all parts of one's body turned out to be the culprit*
- ***Radheyshyam Giri** is the latest in the list of victims who live in constant fear of death but carry on with their job regardless of the consequences of the absence of standard security procedure on outdoor locations as well. He had a nasty fall when he fell from a height of 22 feet on location shooting of a serial titled *Gunaho Ka Devta* in Jodhpur. He was thankful to the Almighty that the fall only rendered him immobile for five*

weeks. He fractured his right leg but escaped from the jaws of death.

- It was on the sets of *Leander Paes* debut film, *Rajdhani Express* that an elderly junior artist suffered a *heart attack*. *Paes*, the ace Indian tennis star had the shooting cancelled and took the man to the hospital. Unfortunately he breathed his last that night. While *Paes* was devastated, the reports in the Press did not investigate if first aid was given to him on the sets and whether any doctor is available in the studio in case of any emergency. The absence of any provision for treatment of emergency cases on the sets puts the life of unit members at great risk. Work may be bread and butter for unit hands or workers and technicians but it's also the question of life and death.
- He was the sole bread earner of his family, comprising his wife and three children. Forty year old *Vijay Gupta*, *Light man*, kissed death when on a chilly winter night he plummeted to the ground from atop a 37 Ft. tress while fitting lights. The site of his falling onto protruding steel rods and his impalement presented a gory picture on the sets of television serial *Laagi Tujhse Lagan* in State Government owned *Film City*, Goregaon. Eye witnesses recall the fact that he was shivering since it happened to be very cold. It is also reported that he was taken to various hospitals which were not opened late in the night. When finally they were taken in by *the Bhagwati Hospital*, he was declared dead on arrival. The untimely demise of this young light man should draw our attention to the absence of any safety measures on the sets. Did he have safety belt on him to take care of any sudden fall? Is any ambulance available in the Government owned *Film City* to take such victims to the nearest clinic or hospital? Since several units shoot in the sprawling *Film City*, it is criminal negligence on the part of both the administrators as well as producers not to have a doctor present on the sets to provide first aid or treatment to any victim.
- Three consecutive deaths brought the curtains down on the year 2010. Within a period of a few days three workers met with untimely death. But *Sudhirkumr Sonkar*, aged 28 years, a Painter, could add up to the list of those youngsters who are becoming victims of heart attacks at an age when they are supposed to be at the peak of their health. He suffered cardiac arrest while shooting on the sets of a television serial
- The untimely demise of over stressed and overworked television director *Jaggi* (Jagdish Sharma) due to cardiac arrest on the sets of *Anurag Basu's* tele-serial *Love Story* robbed the television

industry of yet another promising talent. He was only 35 years old. A candle light march was organized in Film City to express solidarity and a Charter of Demands was released. However, such gestures turn out to be a mere act of tokenism if not followed up by any concrete action.

Earthling

Electrical Department

- Accidents happen frequently but it is attributed to *fate* by a crew member from the electric department. It is not an exception but a rule that no provision for earthling is provided for-be it coolers or fans. Even generators come with a *3-phase 4-wire* system. With 3 wires for phase and 1 for neutral, where is the wire left for earthlings? The earthling in two naked ends is put into the socket. It is very dangerous and can result in accidents. Incidents where workers have died due to electric shock are not uncommon.
- There are instances when you see the live wire running under your feet or a part of a set about to give away. Shooting here is always accompanied by a sense of fear. A normal sight seen in studios here is rickety scaffoldings, sparks flying from plug points and spotlights, spot boys and light men flapping around in cheap slippers instead of safety shoes, set designers without head gear and painters smeared with turpentine. In none of our studios we have fire-fighting equipment.

Maintenance

Camera Department

Equipment, especially *Cranes* should be maintained by trained operators. The crane is basically a seesaw. It's not that we don't have the technology in India, but no one wants to spend on a crane that meets the safety standards. Hence from the shooting point of view it is not possible to contrive complicated moves while shooting.

- *The giraffe Classic maintenance guidelines book* provides for compulsory training for operators to upgrade themselves. Their licenses must be renewed annually or test pieces must be examined as per *EN27* and approved by an independent test facility no longer than 12 months prior to undertaking any manufacture or repair of alloy camera cranes.

Deathly fall

Left to God

- A 100 feet jump would continue to haunt his family. It cost him his life. The boy who had done 100 feet jumps regularly approached his stunt director to allow him to do the stunt since he badly needed money to pull through hard times. He was allowed to take that fall on the sets of *The Godmother*. Ironically he had taken all the safety precautions and the jump turned out to be perfect. One can watch the fall on the screen. But the camera did not catch him falling straight on his head. *“What that means is that even after taking all the precautions, some percent of it is still left to God”*. This is how a colleague summed up the incident. His director opined that it was only after the accident that one could pinpoint the mistake.

A Watery Grave

A costly nose dive

- Yet another tragedy involving a stuntman shook the entire fraternity of those who perform dangerous stunts at the risk of their lives. *Said Amjad Haji*, himself a car stuntman and the son of the deceased stuntman recalls the incident in his own words-*“For car stunts, we would make a ramp from which the car would take off. Now once the car leaves the ramp, there is no way of estimating, where or how the car would land. However my father could land on the bull’s eye. He would mark before the jump. I saw it happen. I saw my dad’s car nose dive into the water. Keeping safety in mind, they had a team of swimmers ready for rescue. We had fitted the car with inflated tubes to keep it afloat. But in spite of the tubes the car sank. For twenty minutes the swimmer’s tried to locate the car, but couldn’t find it. In his days he would agree to do any stunt. But these days, we don’t commit to a stunt unless it’s safe. When we set out for a stunt in the morning we are not sure that we will be back home safely. The family’s attitude is such that once burnt twice shy. Never thought about insurance! A small Quran talisman that works as my lucky*

charm is reserved for the big stunts. Not for the garden variety stunts every day.”

Dressing his own wounds

- What keeps them going? Thrill? Adventure? Or financial constraints? *Shyam Kaushal*, the much in demand stunt director underwent three surgeries that left scars on his abdomen. While his wounds had not healed fully, he was on the sets. It was an internal injury that could have cost him his life. Before he could make his debut as an independent stunt director he had gone through all the rigors-punches, falls, tumbles, fires. Despite the life threatening injury in 2006 he was reported to have remarked-“*Once you get into this profession, you have to be prepared for injuries. But there should be something to back us in our bad times. At the very least, insurance is what we expect from the film industry”*

A few steps to eternity

- But *Joseph*, in his mid-thirties was not so fortunate while doing a stunt for tele serial *Sindoor Tere Naam Ka* at *Basera Studio* at Kandivali East where he was supposed to set himself on fire and walk few steps. After the shot had been canned he felt uneasy and became unconscious. He was rushed to a nearby hospital but was declared dead before admission. He was suspected to have suffered a heart attack.

Run Over

- Let’s take another example of negligence. The driver of a vehicle was sleeping under the vehicle with his legs stretched out. It was probably a generator van or some production vehicle. It was dark. They were doing a night shift and that too at a railway station. Someone else took out his vehicle. He was leaving and didn’t look down. He ran over the man’s legs.
- A stuntman goes through a lot of struggles when performing a stunt. They are under constant pressure to earn their daily bread and butter. Hence performing difficult stunts become a

do or die situation for him. It is also to be noted that most of stuntmen live in most precarious conditions.

Freak Accident or Negligence

- It happened to be a makeshift bridge erected for shooting. Metal sheets had been placed on the bridge. They could be slippery and the vehicle could either skid or swerve. The bridge was narrow and could accommodate only one vehicle. All prevailing conditions cried for strict adherence to safety measures in advance. The shot was ready to be canned. The jeep driver was destined to survive. The *Assistant Director Suhail Shah* who had worked with *Kashyap* on several of his earlier projects was at the wheel while *Ghulam* the driver sat beside him. The camera rolled and *Sohail* accelerated the speed only to find two persons on his path. He swerved his jeep to the side and an iron rod hanging on the side of the bridge pierced his ear. The two were rushed to the Heritage Hospital in *Varanasi* where the Assistant succumbed to his injuries on 23rd of December 2010. The driver was treated for minor back and head injuries. The crew of Producer Directors' Anurag Kashyap's *Gangs of Wasseypur* had been camping for fifteen days on locations near the famed city of *Varanasi* (Banaras) in the state of Uttar Pradesh. The incident begs questions about safety measures being adopted in shooting in canning such shots. The incident also raises a very important question-Why was the driver not driving the Jeep? Should *Assistant Directors* be asked or allowed to undertake or perform jobs that do not fall within the ambit of their job profile?

RIGORS OF GRUELLING SCHEDULES

The situation has been aggravated on account of phenomenal growth and expansion of the television sector which provides more employment opportunities. Shooting schedules that should be called inhuman are the norm in the television industry. Production houses and companies that have all the facilities and funds at their disposal and several on air daily soaps/serials and reality shows have sometimes no episodes in the bank. Writers are made to manipulate the exit and entries of several artists if they fall sick when their bodies can no longer take the rigors of gruelling schedules.

There are those rare ones who overcome heavy pay packets and opt for a break to distress them. They don't complain simply for the fear of being replaced by those waiting in the wings. No doubt the bank balance may swell but ailments like *diabetes*, *hypertension*, or even *heart attacks* also await those who have become used to punishing their bodies over a period of time.

Workers and technicians, including those who were daily rated workers like *Lightmen*, *Carpenters* etc., are now mostly employed on a monthly salary basis but without the benefits of a normal working shift of 8 hours, compulsory weekly holidays, gratuity and provident fund. They have no social life and ironically their daily lives are confined within the four walls of a studio.

As long as television serials were telecast on the week and not daily basis, the Production house could create a bank of episodes. Multi camera set up is only used in reality shows but for serials only a single camera set up is available. Given the constraints of time and meeting deadlines, this kind of set up consumes more time.

CHAOTIC CONDITIONS

*Another factor that creates the kind of chaotic conditions is that several artists, especially those playing leading roles are simultaneously doing two projects. The Channel stipulates delivery date(s) for each episode which cannot be missed. The situation is best summed up when the director of a tele serial who was a witness to his leading artists collapsing on the set due to exhaustion is reported to have said-**"Hope she gets better. Or else she will have to take the saline and work. The show must go on"**.*

Few incidents cited above are only meant to highlight the fact that there is complete absence of fire safety equipment and violations of fire safety bylaws, especially in the make shift serial sets.

SCANT RESPECT FOR BASIC SAFETY NORMS

Sets, specially erected inside estates reserved for industrial or commercial use do not have fire safety equipment. This is true in case of several studios where the only visible equipment happens to be a solitary fire-extinguisher. Mills that were closed long ago are now used for erection of dummy sets. In the absence of any security

arrangements or fire safety measures there is a constant risk to members of the unit while shooting.

ABSENCE OF BASIC AMENITIES

Far from ensuring that safety measures do not violate the civic rules, what is galling is the fact that even basic amenities like toilets, safe and clean drinking water and emergency medical help is not provided. The female junior artists have to venture into the jungle to change their clothes. The toilets are epitome of unhygienic conditions. Sometimes the workers have to take a long walk from their sets erected on outdoor locales to the studio premises to use toilet facilities. It is reported that many of them fall sick on account of unhygienic conditions.

The *BMC* (The Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation), the local civic body recently issued notices to section of owners of studios and producers of tele serials that have erected scores of make shift sets by using acres of open space and industrial estates lying vacant after their closure. They put the onus of proving the legality of structures on Producers. That these sets have been in place for a number of years and the work has been going on implies that the *BMC* knows about their existence and have allowed their construction. The situation is no different in several other studios.

While *FWICE* (Federation of Western India Cine Employees), the parent body of all 22 unions has often drawn the attention of civic authorities, fire brigade, studio owners, and producers, there has been no serious concern shown by the authorities concerned... No **Safety Code** has been devised by concerned unions. This code should form part of the *MOU* with Producers bodies to ensure that proper and established safety norms are adhered to and fire fighting equipment is installed in all studios.

THE STAGE IS SET FOR ILLNESS

The idea of job stress is often confused with challenge, but these concepts are not the same. Challenge energizes us psychologically and physically, and it motivates us to learn new skills and master our jobs. Challenge is an important ingredient for healthy and productive work. When a challenge is successfully met, we feel relaxed and satisfied. The importance of challenge in our work lives is probably

what people are referring to when they say "a little bit of stress is good for you.

But for too many people, the situation is different. Healthy and desirable work challenge has turned into job demands that cannot be met, relaxation has turned to exhaustion, and a sense of personal pride and satisfaction has turned into feelings of stress. In short, the stage is set for illness, injury, and job failure.

WORK ROLES

Conflicting or uncertain job expectations, too much responsibility, and too many hats to wear are just some of the cases in which employees can feel caught in difficult, seemingly no-win, and ultimately stressful situations during the course of their work day.

JOB STRESS & HEALTH

Short-lived or infrequent episodes of stress pose little risk. But when stressful situations go unresolved, the body is kept in a constant state of hyper-alert activation, which increases the rate of wear and tear to biological systems. Ultimately, fatigue or damage results, and the ability of the body to repair and defend itself can become seriously compromised. As a result, the risk of injury or illness (mental or physical, e.g., depression or high blood pressure) escalates.

In the past 20 years, many studies have looked at the relationship between job stress and a variety of ailments. Mood and sleep disturbances, upset stomach and headache, and disturbed relationships with family and friends are examples of stress-related problems that are quick to develop and are commonly seen in these studies. These early signs of job stress are usually easy to recognize. But the effects of job stress on chronic diseases are more difficult to see because chronic diseases take a long time to develop and can be influenced by many factors other than stress. Nonetheless, current evidence strongly suggests that stress plays an important role in several types of chronic health problems-especially cardiovascular disease, musculoskeletal disorders, and psychological disorders.

GENERAL CODE OF SAFETY PRACTICES

You don't have to wait until you become sick, anxiety-ridden, depressed, or completely stressed out to benefit from the insight, care and objectivity therapy can provide! If you think your workplace is a current or potential source of stress for you, you might consider consulting with a therapist to determine ways you can either minimize or avoid altogether work-related stress.

Other industries are mandated to follow specific safety measures to ensure safety of workers and technicians primarily for the reason that they are recognized as an industry by way of application of various laws enacted in State Assemblies and Indian Parliament. Although trade unions in the entertainment industry are organized to the extent that their parent body has *MOU* with Producers bodies with regard to wages and working conditions, no pro labour law is applicable to them. Unions are more focused in ensuring member to member working arrangement and resolution of disputes pertaining to earned wages. *Safety and Health* is perhaps the least area of concern.

We have extensively dealt with several incidents resulting in the death of workers and technicians on sets and on locales. Attempt has also been made to draw attention to absence of safety measures and medical facilities. It is imperative that we understand the importance given to *Health and Safety* of workers and technicians in entertainment industries in countries like *USA, UK, and Australia*. The safety code and measures approved are available to all concerned. Many key features of such codes and practices could be adopted by our *producers* after deliberations with *Federation of Western India Cine Employees*. In fact it would not be out of place to reiterate the need to include them as key features in the *MOU* signed between Federation and Producers bodies.

Contract Service Administration Trust Fund, California, USA administers a wide variety of programs for the benefit of the motion picture and television industry in Hollywood. It is governed by the collective bargaining agreement by and between the *Producers, the International Alliance of Theatrical Stage Employees, the Moving Picture Artists, and Allied Crafts of the United States, its territories and Canada* as well as the Collective Bargaining by and between the Producers and the Basic Crafts Locals. It is administered by Board of Trustees appointed by the *Alliance of Motion Picture & Television Producers*. It is financed by way of contributions from signatory Producers for each hour worked by or guaranteed a covered employee.

Safety bulletins are developed and issued by the *Industry-Wide Labor Management Safety Committee* during the last two decades. *The General Code of Safety Practices* incorporates information from such safety bulletins. While several guidelines have evolved from *Federal, State and/or Local laws and regulations*, there are several features that don't require any professional or expert opinion to evolve.

It is interesting to note that all Producers are required to have and post a general set of *Code of Safety Practices* at each set, location, or job site.

It is observed that adherence to safety practices serious accidents and injuries can be avoided or prevented.

A few guidelines worth following or adhering to areas under:-

- All Production Concerns or Companies or Producers or Employers are required to name a person responsible for safety on the production as outlined in their *Injury and Illness Prevention Program*.
- Call sheets contain important safety information for the next day's shoot.
- Safety Meetings are conducted whenever necessary to brief workers and technicians or crew members on potentially hazardous set conditions.
- All questions concerning hazardous and/or unsafe conditions should be addressed to supervisor/production manager, producer, union representative, or studio safety

representative. No action or disciplinary action will be taken against any crew member reporting such conditions on the studio safety hotline anonymously.

- Fire equipment (hydrants, extinguishers, sprinklers, hoses etc.) must be accessible at all times.
- All cables should be neatly routed.
- If involved in any stunt, special effect, aviation sequence, water sequences or other potentially hazardous or unusual activities, additional Safety meetings may be held for such activities.
- Whenever working greater than 30 inches or 6 feet (during construction) above the floor, ground or other working areas, when standard guardrails or other equivalent protection is not available, use of appropriate fall protection equipment is advised.
- Temporary stair railings and guardrails are required around elevated surfaces, pits, holes or other unprotected openings. Proper lighting in such areas and post signs are necessary.
- Unprotected work areas such as platforms, sets, walkways, cliffs, floor openings, shafts and rooftops (when approaching within 6 feet of the roof's edge) require the use of approved fall protection measures. These measures include but are not limited to guardrails, barriers, safety net systems, a written fall protection plan, and/or the use of personal fall arrest, fall restraint, or working positioning systems.
- Appropriate personal protection equipment and/or other safety equipment must be provided to the cast and crew as needed. There must be a planned escape route and each person involved should personally check all escape routes. Only persons authorized by the special effects and/or Stunt Coordinator shall be allowed in the area.

OBSERVATION: *We can observe from the above that many accidents that took place on sets of our films could have been avoided if Production concerns and Unions had a Safety code in order.*

BECTU

(The Media and Entertainment Union, UK) issued a *Handbook* covering key health and safety issues, especially while working on location. The *Advice* from *BECTU* contains useful information for the

benefit of crew members. Let us examine those that are of immediate concern to our workers and technicians.

- Long working hours can cause fatigue and stress. Cumulative effects can make you more prone to errors and accidents, infections, long term ill health or falling asleep at the wheel. *BECTU* believes that no one should work more than 12 hours a day. By law you are entitled to rest breaks, daily breaks (min 11 hours), weekly breaks for at least 35 hours or a fortnightly break of at least 59 hours, a minimum average working week of 48 hours (if you agree to do more it should not invoke health risks).
- Planning should avoid unreasonable schedules, food or sleep deprivation and unnecessary retakes especially those involving stressful or tiring activities. Production companies therefore schedule working hours sensibly, taking travel time into account, and provides accommodation for crew and cast when working on locations. Everyone is entitled to work free from harassment, bullying, or abuse.
- Risk assessments should include measures to prevent work related stress and promote good working relationships.

Relevant Law: *Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations, 1999, Working Time Regulations, 1998 (as amended)*

- Work equipment must be safe, suitable, well maintained, thoroughly inspected after transport/installation, accompanied by documentation/records, and safely operated. Different equipment and safety standards may apply abroad-information must be obtained beforehand.
- Welfare facilities and refreshments are important particularly when working in extreme of temperatures. Uncontaminated drinking water and suitable washing and sanitary facilities must always be readily available to all concerned. Take precautions against risks of food contamination.

Relevant Law: *Workplace (Health, Safety and Welfare) Regulations 1992; Electricity at Work Regulation 1989; Control of Substances Hazardous to Health Regulations 2002; Personal Protective Equipment Regulations 2002; Manual Handling Operations Regulations 1992; Provision and Use of Work Equipment Regulations 1998; Lifting Operations and Lifting Equipment Regulations 1998.*

OBSERVATION: *We can observe that a number of regulations/laws are already in place in U.K. while no such laws are applicable in our industry. What is applicable is mentioned in MOU signed between Federation and Producers Bodies. In the recent MOU entered into by both parties Health and Safety concerns are confined to only 12 hours shift and insurance. But the shift timings are constantly violated and shootings are brought to halt by the Vigilance Committee of the Federation by way of non-co-operation. How many Production Companies insure the entire unit or crew members are open to investigation and debate?*

AEIA,

The *Australian Entertainment Industry Association* and the **MEAA** (*Media and Entertainment and Arts Alliance*) have evolved **Safety Guidelines** for the Entertainment Industry in order to minimize risk in the workplace. The Guidelines have evolved after extensive consultations. It is mentioned that endorsement is being sought from relevant workers' compensation authorities.

The Guidelines are also part of a broad *Occupational Health and Safety* (OH&S) framework for the entertainment industry which will lead to development of *National Code of Practice*.

The regulation of working conditions and adherence to key safe safety and health practices in *Australia* should also be highlighted to draw attention of trade unionists to the fact that there is an urgent need to evolve our *Safety Code* for the benefit of all concerned. The key features of the arrangement worked out between *AEIA* and *MEAA* are highlighted below:-

In all states and territories of *Australia*, there is health and safety legislation that applies to all workplace practices. All Productions, events, and venues must comply with relevant legislation and any person working outside these requirements may be subject to fines and/or prosecution. The legislation, in particular, requires all organizations involved in the entertainment industry to:-

- *Have policies and procedures that aim to protect the health and safety of all.*
- *Ensure such policies and procedures are documented and available to all.*

- *Undertake risk assessments to identify hazards and implement appropriate control measures.*
- *Consult with all involved in the workplace.*
- *Ensuring the health and safety at work is a shared responsibility between the producing company, the venue and all their workers and contractors.*

In view of accidents taking place frequently on sets and locations in our industry, it is worth noting the relevant segment titled **SAFETY INDUCTION** contained in the Guidelines.

SAFETY INDUCTION: All those working on a production or at an event should be given sufficient information to enable them to perform their job safely. Irrespective of the duration of their engagement period, all those working on a production or event must be given an induction at each work site at which they will perform duties. It must include information relevant to the event or production. Time will be put aside on the first day of employment at each venue or site for this induction. Key issues likely to be covered include:-

- Relevant site layout including location of:
 - *Safe access and egress points,*
 - *Facilities and amenities,*
 - *OH&S equipment including personal and protective equipment,*
 - *First aid and emergency equipment,*
 - *Material safety data sheets for any relevant hazardous substances;*
- *Emergency and evacuation procedures and relevant personnel (including recognition/use of fire extinguishers);*
- *Crucial workplace-specific procedures, including relevant manual handling issues.*

We have observed how a young light man *Vijay Gupta* kissed death when on a chilly winter night he plummeted to the ground from atop a 37 ft. tress while fitting lights. The venue was State owned *Film City*. Let us examine a few relevant guidelines contained in the section *Work Involving Heights*. Perhaps if few safety measures were in order or in place, *Gupta's* precious life could have been saved.

All Work involving Heights: A risk assessment must be done for all situations where work is done at a height. It must include consideration of those working below. Key issues include:-

- Where there is potential for a person to be injured by a fall from a height, appropriate precautions must be taken, including:-
 - *Wear a fall arrest device when one is specified;*
 - *Do not undertake work requiring the use of fall arrest or restraint devices until you have been given appropriate training in their use and maintenance-including how to avoid pendulum effect injuries;*
 - *Check that all harnesses, lanyards, fall arrest and fall restraint devices are manufactured and maintained to Australian standards;*
 - *Have an effective communications system between those at a height and those on the ground.*
- *Height rescue procedures must be developed for every workplace where work at a height is undertaken.*
- *Safe access must be provided for all work at heights where there is potential for a person to fall more than 1.8 meters, including:*
 - *Where possible, use mobile platforms rather than ladders;*
 - *Ensure mobile access equipment has its wheels locked prior to use*
 - *Do not enter scaffolding until the appropriately qualified person has completed its erection;*
 - *Only ascend/descend facing towards the ladder and hold on while doing so.*
- *Safe working practices must be implemented while working at a height including:*
 - *Ensure vision is not obstructed;*
 - *Where there are no guardrails, use an approved safety harness connected to a secure anchor point;*
 - *Do not work beyond the side of ladders or over guardrails;*
 - *Do not place ladders on other structures to extend their reach;*

- *Wear appropriate footwear to minimize slipping, clothing to minimize risk of snagging and tie back hair at all times.*
- *Appropriate precautions must be taken against injury to people below those working at a height , including:*
 - *Take aloft only essential tools and equipment;*
 - *Prior to ascending, secure all tools and equipment with lanyards to prevent them falling on those below, and empty pockets of any unsecured items;*
 - *Implement appropriate control measures to prevent scenery, props, etc. from creating a risk by falling.*
- *Signs must be clear, unobstructed and in conspicuous places.*

In Mumbai's entertainment industry, most of the accidents involve Lightmen falling from heights on account of fatigue, long working hours and other allied reasons. Even if there are no proper basic safety measures adopted on sets and locations and taking into consideration the fact that chances of Unions and Producers bodies engaging in an extensive consultations to frame necessary *Guidelines* pertaining to *Health & Safety* are dim, the *FSS&AMU* (Film Studio Setting & Allied Mazdoor Union) should take cognizance of the fact that it is their members who meet with accidents that lead to loss of life. The union that has more than *38,000 members* on its roll should frame safety guidelines and ensure that all concerned adhere to it. While it can enforce non-cooperation against erring Producers in matters of non-payment of wages, it can also enforce ban or extend non-cooperation against such Producers who do not have safety measures in place. At the same time it can also take disciplinary action against its own members for violating any provision of *Guidelines* framed by it. To begin with *FSS&AMU and other unions* can take the following steps:-

- ***Organize workshops to acquaint its members with various provisions relating to Safety & Health.***
- ***Organize regular inspection of sets and locations. Employ a professional Supervisor to undertake such inspections.***

- ***Report to Fire Brigade Department in case of absence of any emergency equipment on sets.***
- ***Appoint a Committee to undertake inspection of all Studios to find out if fire fighting equipment is installed and facilities of medical aid are available in case of any emergency.***
- ***Co-ordinate with Art Directors and Production Managers to ensure that Lightmen are not put to any risk and that material used, including chemicals, for construction of sets is not sub-standard and hazardous to health.***
- ***Ensure that portable and safe drinking water is available and food provided to their members is prepared in hygienic conditions.***
- ***Any laxity on the part of Studio owners in maintaining basic safety standards should be reported to all concerned authorities for necessary action.***
- ***Ensure that workers and technicians have access to clean and airy Rest and Changing rooms.***
- ***New entrants must be made to undergo test for skills while up gradation of those already employed must be made mandatory.***

