



Emerald Media Group High-Risk Coverage Safety Protocol

This policy will be reviewed and updated as conditions change.

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Preface:

With all ensuing guidance and policy taken into full consideration, reporters should always trust their instincts and remove themselves from any situation in which they sense danger. Your judgment is ultimately the best indicator of risk, and as they say, “no story is worth dying for.”

I. Purpose & Scope

These guidelines exist as a framework of standard protocol and procedure to adhere to during protests in general, and specifically in the current environment of frequent DHS/ICE protests that have become increasingly dangerous for journalists and protesters alike.

Furthermore, these guidelines serve as a duty of care to student journalists employed by and reporting for *The Daily Emerald*, including — but not limited to — guidance on when to vacate an area, required personal protective equipment (PPE), and other safety-related decision-making.

Who This Applies To

These guidelines apply to all *Daily Emerald* staff members who are on scene or overseeing protest coverage, particularly in situations involving escalation, including arrests, detentions, deployment of chemical munitions, and aggression by agents of law enforcement..

II. Threat Environment Overview

The threat environment for protests is typically limited in scope; however, in light of recent actions by DHS and ICE, the risk profile of protests has changed significantly. Protests now



present elevated dangers from agitators and counter-protesters, as well as an increased risk of escalation by federal agents. This escalation has included the use of chemical munitions, projectiles, flashbangs, arrests, surveillance, and other coercive tactics.

A notable and growing risk—beyond the increasing use of chemical munitions, including but not limited to tear gas, pepper balls and spray, rubber bullets, and flash-bang grenades—is the expanded use of aerial surveillance targeting journalists and protesters.

The increasing deployment of aerial surveillance, including drones and helicopters, poses significant safety and privacy concerns for journalists. Additionally, digital enforcement tactics have escalated, including attempts at forced Face ID or fingerprint access, unlawful search and seizure of journalistic materials, and other forms of digital intrusion. Section X. outlines the digital security measures required for *Daily Emerald* staff to mitigate these risks.

Furthermore, it is critically important to recognize that press identifiers — including press jackets, press badges, and press helmets — are not consistently respected by many federal agencies. Journalists may be indiscriminately targeted or subjected to threats of detainment or arrest and/or force despite clearly identifying as press.

This reality does not diminish the legal and ethical importance of identifying as press; however, it must be acknowledged as a significant component of the current threat environment and factored into all safety decisions.

III. Pre-Assignment Preparation

Risk Assessment Before Deployment

Reporters and editors shall conduct a pre-deployment risk assessment prior to covering any protest. This assessment should consider protest size, tone, and history; the presence of law enforcement or federal agencies; the potential for escalation or violence; and any other contributing risk factors.

Staff shall identify and document in writing both known and unknown factors in order to assess overall risk and weigh those risks against the intended journalistic outcome, including on-scene coverage, interviews, or visual documentation. If it is determined that the risks outweigh the potential coverage benefits, the editor-in-chief or supervising editor shall make the final determination and develop alternate reporting plans, including off-site or remote coverage.

Personal readiness

If a risk assessment or external conditions indicate a likelihood of use of force or the deployment of chemical munitions, reporters shall be advised to remove contact lenses and utilize



appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE), including gas masks or respirators, helmets, and protective gloves, that will be provided by the Emerald upon request and editor approval.

All PPE shall be provided by the newsroom and sanitized after use. Gas masks or respirators must provide full eye coverage and form a proper seal around the eyes. Acceptable alternatives include a combination of sealed ski or safety goggles paired with a paint-style respirator or other devices that adequately protect the eyes, nose, and mouth from chemical munitions.

Helmets are strongly recommended and may include bicycle helmets, ski helmets, or professional protective helmets. Helmets should be worn to reduce the risk of injury from thrown objects, flash-bang grenades, and potential falls or trips during rapid movement or crowd dispersal.

Staff are strongly encouraged to use hearing protection in environments where flash-bang grenades, explosive devices or sustained loud noise may be present. Acceptable hearing protection may include foam earplugs or over-ear hearing protection. Flash-bang grenades and similar devices can cause severe or permanent acoustic injury without adequate protection.

Lastly, in the event of arrest or detention, reporters are strongly encouraged to write the phone numbers of the editor-in-chief, the overseeing editor, and publisher Eric Henry, 541-760-5361, on their arm using permanent marker.

In the event of arrest or detention, as detailed further in Section IX these contact numbers are critical to ensuring prompt notification of leadership, coordination of legal support, and, when applicable, facilitation of bail.

Equipment Checklist

Outside of any PPE deemed necessary following a risk assessment, the following equipment is required at all times while covering protests: clearly visible press credentials, press jackets when available, a fully charged mobile phone with external battery pack, and water.

Optional but strongly recommended equipment includes extra batteries, basic first-aid materials, notepads, writing instruments, and any additional tools necessary for safe and effective reporting in rapidly changing conditions.

IV. Identification as Press

Despite guidance provided to students elsewhere, *The Daily Emerald* mandates the use of visible press identification at all times when reporting in the field. At a minimum, this includes a press badge displaying the reporter's legal name, photograph, and position. After dark, or in low-visibility conditions, the use of reflective press jackets is required.



This requirement is essential to fulfilling our ethical and moral obligation to clearly identify ourselves as journalists, as well as for legal protection in the event of detention or arrest. While possession of press credentials does not guarantee protection from arrest or prosecution, failure to visibly identify as press may allow law enforcement to argue that a journalist did not clearly establish their role or intent during an encounter.

As noted above, press credentials do not provide protection from prosecution or from the use of force, including actions taken by federal agents. Press identification does not permit reporters to disregard lawful instructions, argue with enforcement officials, or engage in conduct beyond the scope of newsgathering.

Daily Emerald staff should not treat press credentials as a guarantee of safety, but rather as a professional obligation and a limited protective measure that supports ethical reporting and may assist in legal clarification during encounters with authorities.

Additionally, reporters must carry valid government-issued identification while on assignment in the event of injury, detention or arrest. Acceptable forms of identification include state-issued ID cards, driver's licenses, passports or other legally recognized identification.

V. Press badge, equipment and credentials protocol

Press credentials must be requested and approved in advance by the editor-in-chief or a supervising editor for coverage of protests or other high-risk events. This approval process exists to ensure staff safety, maintain situational awareness and manage organizational liability.

Staff members may not use Emerald press credentials without authorization. Failure to follow credential approval procedures may result in disciplinary action, including suspension of credential use, removal from assignments, or termination in cases of severe or repeated policy violations.

Equipment including cameras, audio recorders, tripods, microphones and video gear is available for checkout through Creative and Technical Director Annie Smith via the #equipmentcheckout Slack channel. All equipment must be reserved at least 12 hours prior to pickup to ensure proper organization and availability.

The J-Cage in Allen Hall is off-limits for Emerald-related work. Staff may rent J-Cage equipment on their own time for entirely personal coverage; however, Emerald press credentials may not be used while operating J-Cage equipment.

VI. Tear Gas Safety Protocol

In the event of exposure to tear gas, CS gas, or HC gas, reporters should refrain from the following:

- Wearing contact lenses, as chemical irritants may become trapped beneath the lens and cause severe eye injury
- Rubbing the eyes or face, which can worsen irritation and increase absorption

Reporters should immediately:

- Move upwind and, when possible, seek higher ground, as chemical agents tend to remain concentrated closer to the ground
- Use clean water or saline to flush the eyes, face, and exposed skin
- Avoid using milk or other home remedies, as they are ineffective and may increase irritation or contamination
- Seek medical attention immediately in the event of prolonged pain, difficulty breathing or other respiratory issues, vision loss, or any symptoms that persist beyond initial decontamination.
- Upon returning home wash all equipment and clothing in the washing machine immediately, refrain from touching furniture, bedding or other absorbable fabric.
- Shower immediately. Refrain from intense scrubbing, as this can irritate the skin and rub the gas in further. Instead, let hot water run over the body for several minutes before gently shampooing the body and hair.

(CS gas and other advanced forms of tear gas are powders rather than pure gases, allowing the chemical to stick to clothing and the body for prolonged periods; hence the need to avoid touching fabric surfaces and to shower immediately.)

VII. Pepper ball or similar chemical projectile and less-lethal nonchemical projectile protocol

Pepper balls are chemical projectiles that produce large amounts of white smoke upon impact. Agents fire them across the ground, at individuals or across streets, depending on their target. The range and aim of pepper balls make them extremely dangerous.

Bean bag rounds, rubber bullets and salt rounds are impact munitions designed to cause pain and incapacitation. Despite being labeled “less-than-lethal,” these munitions can cause severe injury, permanent disability or death. Injuries are most severe when rounds strike the head, neck, chest, spine or groin.

If pepper balls or non-chemical less lethals are deployed nearby:

- Move away from the direction of fire immediately and seek cover behind solid barriers.
- Avoid open streets or wide intersections where projectiles are commonly fired.
- Do not pick up or touch pepper balls or unexploded projectiles.

If struck by a pepper ball

- Assess for injuries, including bruising, bleeding or head trauma.
- Seek medical attention immediately if hit in the head, neck, face, groin or spine.

General safety guidance:

- Wear eye protection, masks and helmets when operating in areas where pepper balls may be used.
- Maintain situational awareness of agent positioning and firing angles.
- Stay in communication with editors or team leads and exit the area if conditions escalate

VIII. Accessing medical care and workers’ compensation

If an Emerald reporter or employee is injured in any way while on assignment, they should seek immediate and appropriate medical care, including ambulance services, emergency room care, urgent care, or first aid on site. Employees do not need prior approval to seek emergency medical treatment, and safety must take priority over completing an assignment. Injured employees should not continue reporting or attempt to transport themselves if impaired.

If professional medical attention is sought, the employee must contact the editor-in-chief and their supervising editor as soon as it is safe to do so. Injuries or symptoms that appear hours or days later — including chemical exposure effects, concussions, hearing damage or psychological symptoms — must still be reported once identified and may qualify as work-related injuries.



Under state law, employees who seek medical care for a work-related injury will be required to complete a workers' compensation claim. Employees must notify their medical provider that they are seeking care for a work-related injury and obtain all relevant workers' compensation paperwork and documentation.

Employees should document the incident to the extent possible, including the date, time, location and nature of the assignment, as well as any witnesses or editors aware of the assignment. Photos of injuries or damaged protective equipment may be collected when safe and appropriate.

Employees are required to follow all medical advice and treatment guidelines provided by healthcare professionals. Documentation clearing the employee to return to work — including any restrictions or modified duties — must be provided before resuming assignments.

Workers' compensation cases will be escalated to Publisher & President Eric Henry and Vice President of Operations Kathy Carbone, who will work with the employee to file the required employer paperwork and facilitate compensation and accommodations as needed.

Reporting an injury or seeking medical care will not negatively affect an employee's standing, assignments or opportunities with The Emerald.

IX. Interacting with law enforcement

Members of the press are required to comply with all applicable laws and regulations, including lawful orders issued by law enforcement or federal agencies. Press credentials do not provide legal clearance to disregard lawful orders, trespass, enter restricted areas or photograph non-public spaces.

Refusing a lawful order — particularly orders related to trespassing or restricted areas, which are common during protests — may result in citation or arrest. Such cases are unlikely to succeed in court if the reporter failed to comply with a lawful order. If an officer or federal agent issues a lawful order, reporters must comply to the fullest extent feasible and prioritize personal safety.

That said, a reporter's First Amendment rights remain paramount. Reporters retain the right to observe, record and photograph from public spaces where there is no reasonable expectation of privacy. Unlawful orders — such as being told to leave public property or stop lawful newsgathering — may be disregarded only when the reporter is confident they are acting within their legal rights and doing so does not escalate risk.

Reporters should remain calm, professional and non-confrontational at all times and clearly identify themselves as press when appropriate.

Examples of lawful press activity include:

- Standing or photographing on public sidewalks, parks or streets.
- Recording activity outside a federal building while remaining off federal property.
- Photographing or filming law enforcement activity occurring in public view.

Arrests and detentions

If a reporter is arrested, they are strongly advised to exercise their right to remain silent and their Fifth Amendment right against self-incrimination. Reporters should clearly identify themselves as members of the press but should otherwise decline to answer questions without legal representation present.

Reporters must not resist in any form and must comply with all lawful orders to reduce the risk of additional charges or injury.

If permitted a phone call, the reporter should use the previously provided Sharpie-written emergency number to contact the editor-in-chief and/or Publisher Eric Henry, who can begin coordinating legal assistance. Reporters may retain their own legal counsel; however, The Emerald maintains a legal retainer, and reporters are encouraged to use this service at no cost.

Reporters should not provide consent to search devices, and shall not provide passcodes or unlock devices. Additionally, reporters should remove biometric technology unlocking including FaceID and ThumbID given recent instances of agents breaking into the phone of protestors/press. Equipment may be legally seized regardless, but consent is not required or recommended.

Furthermore, anyone detained has the right to request medical attention, if necessary, and should disclose any serious medical needs, including medications, asthma, allergies, etc.

Arrest vs detentions

A detention is a temporary stop by law enforcement for questioning, crowd control or investigation and does not necessarily mean a reporter has been arrested. A detention may still involve physical restraint, including being ordered to sit, kneel, move locations or be temporarily held.

An arrest occurs when a reporter is formally taken into custody, informed they are under arrest, cited or transported to a detention facility.

Arrest vs. Citation

A citation is a form of arrest that does not involve being taken into custodial detention. When issued a citation, an individual is considered legally arrested but is released at the scene rather than being transported, booked or held in a detention facility. Citations typically require a court appearance or other follow-up at a later date and are commonly used at federal facilities with limited holding capacity or for lower-level offenses such as trespassing or property damage.

A custodial arrest occurs when a reporter is taken into physical custody by law enforcement. This may involve being handcuffed, searched, transported to a detention facility, booked and potentially held until release. Custodial arrests carry heightened legal, safety and logistical implications.

During **both detention and arrest**, reporters should:

- Remain calm and non-confrontational.
- Clearly identify themselves as press when appropriate.
- Ask, “Am I being detained or am I under arrest?”
- If not under arrest, ask, “Am I free to leave?”

Even during a detention, reporters are advised to **exercise their right to remain silent** and decline questioning beyond providing identifying information when legally required.

X. Digital Security

As aforementioned in Section IX, reporters are strongly encouraged to remove biometric security measures from their devices, including Face ID and Touch ID, to prevent nonconsensual access to their devices.

Furthermore, reporters are encouraged to use encrypted messaging services such as Signal when communicating with sources involved in high-risk activities, including federal protests. This protects both the source and the journalist.

Other best practices include enabling auto-lock on devices, logging out of nonessential applications, avoiding connection to public or unsecured Wi-Fi networks, and remaining aware that devices seized or recovered during an arrest or detention may be searched.

XI. Photography Safety

It is the photographer's responsibility to avoid identifying individuals under the age of 18 or other vulnerable populations. If there is any doubt about a person's age, photographers must exercise the utmost caution and should not publish the photo.

Additionally, at many federal protests, a group commonly referred to as *Black Bloc*—often wearing all-black clothing, ski goggles and carrying black shields—can be highly aggressive toward photographers. While photographers may have the legal right to photograph them, staff are strongly advised to refrain from close-up shots. These individuals can be violent and confrontational, and maintaining staff safety and de-escalation is a priority.

Furthermore, photographers are strongly advised to remain off the front line of a protest or standoff between demonstrators and federal agents. Staff should position themselves behind the front line and in front of the second line when possible, maintaining a buffer from potential lines of fire while still ensuring priority access for photography. This guidance applies to all Emerald staff.

Lastly, photographers should remain mindful of the scope and reach of the platforms on which their images are published. Photographs taken in protest settings may be reviewed or used by law enforcement or other officials in investigations or prosecutions involving demonstrators, whether related to lawful or unlawful activity.

While it is not the photographer's role to shield individuals from accountability or to withhold documentation of events, staff should exercise editorial judgment when publishing images that include unnecessarily identifiable details. When possible, photographers and editors should consider whether publishing clear facial identification, distinguishing markings or other sensitive information could place individuals at heightened risk without adding significant journalistic value.

The Emerald's priority is to accurately document events while minimizing unnecessary harm.

XII. Crowd Dynamics

All Emerald staff working in the field must remain aware of crowd dynamics at all times and continuously assess their ability to move safely away from a scene. Before positioning, staff should identify multiple exit routes and maintain a clear path of retreat. Avoid placing yourself in areas where exits are limited, blocked or controlled by fencing, vehicles or law enforcement lines.

Staff should be alert to kettling, a crowd-control tactic in which law enforcement restricts movement by gradually surrounding or confining demonstrators. Kettling can occur quickly and



without warning. Indicators may include police lines forming behind a crowd, vehicles or bicycles blocking streets, or officers directing movement into increasingly narrow areas. Once movement is restricted, the risk of detention, injury or exposure to crowd-control munitions increases significantly.

Staff should also be cautious of other crowd-control mechanisms, including rapid line advances, sudden dispersal orders, vehicle movements, mounted units, chemical irritants, less-than-lethal munitions, and crowd compression caused by panic or surging. These conditions can change rapidly and may create dangerous bottlenecks or trampling risks.

If exit routes become compromised, staff should prioritize disengagement and safety over continued coverage. No story, photo or update is worth being trapped, injured or detained.

XIII. Professionalism and personal boundaries

Professionalism is of the utmost importance for ethical and reputational reasons. While on scene, Emerald staff shall exercise the highest level of professionalism regardless of conditions. This includes being mindful of conversation topics, avoiding extreme or inflammatory profanity and maintaining appropriate professional distance in interactions with protesters.

While reporting for The Emerald, staff are expected to engage solely in newsgathering activities. Under no circumstances, regardless of subject matter, shall a reporter cross the line into advocacy, crowd participation, violence or agitation. Staff shall not participate in crowd chants, heckling, taunting or any other behavior that constitutes protest participation.

Engaging in such activity will result in immediate removal from the scene and may lead to disciplinary action, including suspension or termination. Reporters must remain mindful that they represent The Emerald and its credibility at all times and conduct themselves accordingly.

Furthermore, Emerald credentials may only be used for official newsgathering on behalf of The Emerald. No Emerald reporter may use Emerald credentials for personal photography, blogs, Substack posts, class assignments or other non-Emerald work. Staff wishing to conduct such work may do so on their own time using their own equipment and press materials.

Lastly, Emerald staff members are expected to dress appropriately while on assignment. This includes avoiding clothing, logos, symbols or slogans that support or oppose the subject of a protest, make political statements or could reasonably be viewed as offensive or provocative.

Staff are encouraged to wear practical, protective clothing suitable for protest environments. Solid pants, such as jeans or other durable materials, are recommended to provide added protection against chemical munitions and environmental exposure. This includes wearing



closed-toe shoes, protective gloves and hats when appropriate, as well as layered clothing to accommodate changing conditions and provide additional protection.

Blurring the line between professional and protest activity, or between professional and personal work, constitutes a serious breach of journalistic ethics and undermines community trust.

XIV. Surveillance Awareness and Post-Assignment Safety

Emerald staff should be aware that increased surveillance may occur during or after high-risk coverage, including the use of aerial drones, fixed cameras and plainclothes observation. In some instances, surveillance may extend beyond the immediate protest area and even to the staff members place of residence.

Staff should remain alert to drones or other monitoring equipment operating above or near protest sites and should assume that activity in public spaces may be recorded. While staff should continue to document events as assigned, awareness of surveillance conditions is essential for personal safety.

Following high-risk assignments, staff are encouraged to take reasonable precautions to protect their safety and privacy. This may include avoiding lingering near protest sites, not parking directly adjacent to federal buildings or law enforcement staging areas and varying departure routes when feasible. Staff should avoid parking in a three block radius of the scene or avoid driving altogether where feasible.

If a staff member believes they are being followed, monitored or targeted after leaving an assignment, they should prioritize their safety, disengage from the situation and notify an editor as soon as possible.

Surveillance activities in protest settings may, in many cases, function as an intimidation tactic rather than indicating direct action against journalists. While staff should not be unduly alarmed by the presence of surveillance, they should remain mindful of their surroundings at all times and continue to prioritize personal safety and professional conduct.

XV. Buddy System and Staff Accountability

Emerald staff are strongly encouraged to work in pairs or small groups during high-risk coverage whenever possible. Having at least two staff members present improves situational awareness, allows for mutual support in emergencies and provides an added layer of accountability.

After dark, the buddy system is **mandatory** for all Emerald staff engaged in field reporting, photography or live coverage in high-risk environments. No staff member may work alone after dark without explicit approval from a managing editor.



Staff working together should maintain visual contact whenever feasible and establish clear check-in expectations before and during an assignment. Pairs or groups must establish a mutual meeting point in the event they become separated. This meeting point should be located a sufficient distance from the primary scene to account for chemical agents or other hazards, with a recommended minimum distance of three blocks.

Staff should remain together whenever possible. If one staff member enters a more volatile area, the use of an earpiece or live communication is strongly recommended to maintain connection and ensure clear, continuous communication.

Furthermore, all staff on scene must remain in active communication with a designated off-site Emerald staff member responsible for collecting reporting and monitoring safety. This individual will serve as a relay point in the event of an emergency, loss of contact or separation from assigned partners. This may include but is not limited to phone, Slack and text. Reporters on scene should always have the direct contact information of the off-site staffer given the unreliability of Slack connection.

XVI. Mental Health Support

High-risk coverage, including exposure to chemical agents or violent conditions, can result in significant emotional or psychological responses. Staff should be aware that these reactions may not be immediate and can emerge hours or days after an assignment, particularly as adrenaline subsides.

Emerald staff are encouraged to monitor their mental and emotional well-being following high-risk coverage and to seek support when needed. Experiencing stress, anxiety, emotional numbness, intrusive thoughts or difficulty sleeping after such assignments is not uncommon.

Staff members are encouraged to communicate with editors if they are experiencing delayed effects and may request time away from high-risk assignments without penalty. The Emerald prioritizes staff well-being and recognizes that recovery looks different for each individual.

Staff are encouraged to seek professional help when needed, with the full non-financial support of The Emerald.