

Capture sound in non-controlled production situations

Overview

This Standard is about capturing sound outside of a controlled production situation. This could be for documentaries, current affairs, news, reality TV or some styles of drama.

This involves applying judgement to provide the best possible sound quality, at short notice, with little information and a schedule or requirements which alter unexpectedly. Sound may be provided to a camcorder - controlled by a camera operator - or a transmission delivery system. Sound may also simultaneously be recorded onto a separate recording machine synchronised to the camera. Once shooting starts the sound recordist will probably not have any control over camera audio.

When working on transmission you may be live and you need to establish and maintain communications with destination studio. This is covered in SKSS7 Provide talkback systems

This Standard is applicable to anyone providing sound in non-controlled production situations.

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Performance criteria

You must be able to:

1. provide or ensure availability of, suitable microphones and other equipment suitable to the job and environment
2. position microphones to achieve best possible quality of sound, within production and environmental constraints
3. co-ordinate radio frequency use with any other sound crews in line with production requirements
4. assign appropriate audio feeds to camera channels and adjust internal camera settings to optimise sound quality
5. supply any written details required in appropriate formats
6. operate camera menu systems to achieve the best quality audio, assigned tracks and recording and monitoring levels
7. supply, monitor and check line-up tone at either camera, mixer and/or recorder against requirements
8. confirm at regular intervals that any synchronisation system is suitable, sufficiently accurate and functioning as it should
9. communicate with camera operators about relevant information at appropriate times
10. operate portable audio mixers whilst simultaneously positioning microphones on boom poles
11. produce the best sound quality that is possible without interfering with, or causing undue delay to, productions
12. operate a boom microphone without being a hazard to yourself or others at all times
13. adapt your position during filming to avoid shadows or reflections from unexpected light sources or reflective surfaces
14. record audio to separate recording machines from other microphone sources to provide tracks that are suitable to accompany pictures or productions
15. check at suitable opportunities that audio being recorded meets acceptable programme sound
16. carry protective or weather-appropriate clothing and footwear suitable to protect yourself and avoid compromise to productions
17. carry maintenance kit, tools and spares suitable for repair or replacement in the field
18. identify cable and connector faults and make effective repairs when possible
19. make sure there is a reliable back-up system for when microphones stop working

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Knowledge and understanding

You need to know and understand:

1. the different types of microphones and how to place them discreetly
2. the importance of audibility of dialogue especially with regards to the impaired hearing of an ageing population
3. effective strategies to enhance dialogue audibility
4. that working outside of a controlled production presents unpredictable circumstances and requires flexibility, diplomacy and discretion in attempting to acquire appropriate sound
5. the commonly used production camcorders including domestic and top broadcast models
6. how camcorder models vary in respect to recording audio, suitability for synchronisation methods, audio monitoring and playback
7. the different types of interfaces into which audio is required
8. transmission distribution techniques
9. use and management of radio frequency and frequency management, especially when there are multiple crews
10. how to hold and manoeuvre a pole in a safe posture, within your own physical limits and in a way that is possible to sustain for potentially lengthy periods of time
11. how to operate equipment like booms or poles, and maintain your own and others health and safety especially during precise or difficult manoeuvres
12. technical and legal parameters relevant to radio frequency
13. the line-up process required when sending audio remotely from a mixer
14. the common audio-related problems which may occur whilst a camera is being used for filming and how to avoid or check for these
15. different communication techniques to use with camera operators and when they are also the director
16. relevant information to communicate to camera operators including how their actions may affect sound quality or camera settings, how they may choose what is supplied, potential risks to their health and safety or filming opportunities in the wider environment that they cannot see
17. the terminology and conventions of documentary and single camera drama operations

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regarding framing, camera angles, reverses and shooting styles

18. lighting and natural or uncontrolled light sources in the case of documentary-style filming
19. how to use your own judgement in the absence of a brief or other information about the work to be carried out
20. how to remain adaptable when conditions and sound requirements alter rapidly and uncontrollably
21. camera aspect ratios, framing and shot conventions and how to avoid breaching the edge of frames or compromising camerawork

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