

Broadcast Camera Pooling Guidelines

VIDEO CAMERAS

INTRODUCTION

These guidelines were developed by the South Carolina Broadcasters' Steering Committee for Court Coverage and reviewed by the state Supreme Court as a supplement to Rule 605. Their purpose is to ensure courts are covered properly and that there continues to be reasonable access for television and radio coverage. The committee is comprised of the chairman of the South Carolina Broadcasters' Association News Committee, the president of the South Carolina AP Broadcasters' board, the chief of bureau for The Associated Press (who is also the statewide media coordinator for camera coverage).

COURTS

Requests for coverage will be made with reasonable notice to the presiding judge of the court. When more than one request comes to the judge, he or she will notify the stations. At this point, pooling will be required. It is the responsibility of television and radio stations to resolve pooling and inform the court of the arrangements.

WSPA-TV news director Ken Elmore is the statewide media coordinator for broadcast. Site coordinators may be named as necessary.

POOLING

Pooling is the process by which one, or two, photographers are assigned to protect the interests of all who want pictures. News organizations involved in sharing from the pool have certain obligations, which begin with the choice of a media coordinator.

Should there be a conflict between these guidelines and Rule 605 of the Supreme Court, Rule 605 shall apply.

The media coordinator shall be the sole contact to the presiding judge representing the interests of television and radio. The media coordinator is chosen randomly from representatives of all news organizations. After all parties learn of the need for a pool, they contact one another and meet to choose a coordinator. The coordinator then leads the discussion, which comes up with a plan for pool coverage.

This plan should fairly divide responsibility for coverage among the requesting parties, based on their individual schedules and abilities.

The plan should be written, distributed to each applying party and given to the presiding judge by the media coordinator. The notice must also certify that photographers assigned to the pool have read, understand and agree to abide by the guidelines

established by the court and the state Broadcasters Association. The media coordinator works with the presiding judge to arrange details of coverage, and resolve any concerns so that coverage may proceed without incident.

Should a member of the pool be dissatisfied, or pooling not be resolved, the problem is arbitrated by the Steering Committee for Court Coverage. Its decision is final.

In no case should any lack of resolution, or internal media problem, be handed to any member of the court. It is not their responsibility and may result in a rejection of coverage by all.

The media coordinator may work with the Steering Committee for any technical assistance needed, such as a mult box, and distribution of pool material in the most efficient manner. Should there be additional costs associated with setting up for pool coverage, members of the pool will share equally in such expense. Disputes in this area will be resolved by the media coordinator, or ultimately, the Steering Committee.

Where television and radio apply for coverage, the media coordinator will be a television person due to the logistics required for a successful television shoot.

Camera crews should set up and tear down equipment only during court recesses or at times designated by the presiding judge. Every effort should be made to avoid disrupting the proceedings.

Unless otherwise specified by the presiding judge, here is the recommended attire for photographers:

Men -- slacks with dress shirt (no sneakers).

Women -- slacks or dress (no sneakers).

IMPORTANT NOTE: Some judges may not permit coverage by photographers who wear blue jeans and T-shirts. Those who do so risk being excluded from the courtroom.

OBLIGATION OF COURTESY

Where only one news organization requests coverage, that organization becomes the pool. A television or radio station must be the provider of video and/or audio should the trial become more than one of local interest. Television, radio and newspapers may request pictures or audio from the news organization in a reasonable manner, which may be arbitrated by the Steering Committee. Courtesy credit should be given, if requested, to the originating station(s) by stations not participating in the pool.

DISTRIBUTION

While some stations may simply make a copy of material for requesting stations, South Carolina has a unique capacity for distribution which makes material available statewide.

South Carolina ETV will reserve closed-circuit time in the late afternoon as available for pool feeds of court television. It is the responsibility of the originating station to call

ETV's designated producer-of-the-day who will assign time and inform The Associated Press for a Broadcast Advisory. ETV's contact list will be provided to AP for distribution.

The originating station must make arrangements to either get the tape to the ETV Center, or to a specific feed point for the ETV in-bound system, such as the Health Communications Network at MUSC, or an ETV regional station. The ETV producer will contact the feed point to request their help.

It is obviously very important to get the request in as early as possible on the same day or previous day. In some circumstances, it will not be possible to feed and other arrangements will need to be made by the originating and requesting stations.

ETV will assist stations as requested on how they may receive closed circuit feeds directly in their station with an ITFS receive dish purchased at cost by the station. This way, video and/or audio will go directly from the originating station to the receiving station.

The Associated Press broadcast advisory will make all stations aware of the feed and its availability if they receive South Carolina ETV closed circuit. Requesting stations are responsible for any out-of-pocket costs associated with such feeds.

EQUIPMENT

The media coordinator must discuss the equipment and its location with the presiding judge, who must approve. Equipment must not be visually or aurally distracting, nor have identifying insignia on them. Further guidelines for television and radio will be written by the Steering Committee based on the experience of the experimental period.

IN-SERVICE TRAINING

The Steering Committee, working with the Cameras in the Courts Committees of the South Carolina Press Association and South Carolina Bar, has produced a video training program that is available to all stations. It can be obtained through the SCBA.