

Election Day Safety Checklist



General

- Have you recorded and saved securely the emergency contact information needed in case of an event?
- Does the role, gender, ethnicity, sexual orientation, or profile put you at more risk?
- Do you have the appropriate accreditation, press passes, or a letter indicating your work for your organization?
- Have you identified how you will communicate and remove yourself from a situation if necessary?
- Have you made a plan around how to contact people if there is an internet shutdown and/or a communications blackout?
- Have you planned for what happens in the event of an arrest or detention?



Environment

- Gauge the mood of the crowd. If possible, call other journalists already at the event to assess the mood. Consider going with another reporter or photographer if necessary.
- At the event, report from the designated press area unless it is safe to do otherwise. Ascertain if the security or police will assist if you are in distress and identify your exits.
- If working in a crowd, plan a strategy. It is sensible to keep to the outside of the crowd. Avoid being sucked into the middle where it is hard to escape. Identify an escape route and have an emergency meeting point if working with a team.
- Your Vehicle
- Park your vehicle in a secure location facing the direction of escape, or ensure you have a guaranteed mode of transport.
- Are you driving yourself and, if so, is your vehicle roadworthy and appropriate?
- Do not leave any equipment in vehicles, which are likely to be broken into. After dark, the criminal risk increases

Your Health and Wellbeing

- Do you have any health issues that could affect you during coverage?
- Have you identified the local medical facilities in case of injury?
- Do you have your insurance card for medical coverage?
- Have you considered the possibility of long-term trauma-related stress? If the task was difficult, do not bottle up your emotions. Tell your superiors and colleagues. It is important that they are prepared and that everyone learns from each other.
- Have you prepared for online abuse as a result of covering the election?



Your Devices

- Have you taken steps to secure your devices—including locking devices with a password or PIN—as well as removing content such as documents, photos, and contact details for sensitive sources?
- Review what information is on your phone or laptop. Back up and delete documents, photos, videos, and other material that contain personal information about you, your family, or your sources.
- Be mindful that documents gathered while doing research for election-related stories could put you at risk should your devices be searched. Review footage from cameras and remove photos and videos that you would not want to fall into the wrong hands.
- Set up your devices to remote wipe. Devices will only remote wipe if they are connected to the internet via Wi-Fi or data.
- Think about whether to use biometrics or not to unlock your phone. This can be useful if you need to gain access to your device quickly, but it also means that others are more easily able to unlock your phone by holding it up to your face or forcing your finger to unlock it.
- Turn on encryption for your laptop or Android phone if possible. The latest version of iPhone comes with encryption as standard. Encrypting your devices will ensure that if your device is stolen people will be unable to access your data without the password.
- Log out of and remove apps that you do not need to use when on the election trail, especially apps that contain a lot of personal information about you or your family.
- Take as few devices with you as possible. If you have a spare phone it is better to travel with that and leave your personal phone at home.

Wardrobe

- Wear clothing without media company branding and remove media logos from equipment/vehicles if necessary. Wear appropriate footwear.
- Wear clothing and footwear that allows you to move swiftly. Avoid loose clothing and lanyards that can be grabbed, as well as any flammable material (e.g. nylon). Avoid wearing politically affiliated colors or any colors associated with certain groups.
- Maintain situational awareness at all times and limit the number of valuables you take. Is any special equipment such as body armor, respirators, or a medical kit required?

See generally the [Committee to Protect Journalists](#)

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