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Abstract

SAG-AFTRA and IATSE are two of the most recognized unions in the United States. SAG-AFTRA supports the actors in film and television while IATSE supports the crew members working behind the camera. While most are aware of the unions missions in regard to better wages, contracts and healthcare, there has been little emphasis placed on safety in the entertainment industry, that is, until recently. The recent shooting of cinematographer Halyna [redacted] to the lack of safety on union sets. There has been a significant amount of media attention and literature of late that places blame on the inexperienced non union personnel that work on SAG productions. This article proposes to identify from the literature the failures that occurred, why they occurred and what can be done to prevent them in the future. We performed a survey of Union and Non-Union actors and crew members to ascertain their personal feelings and experiences of onset safety. The result/perception was that while SAG does an excellent job in protecting cast and crew on film sets compared to other industries, there is much room for improvement. There was a correlation between the literature and the personal surveys that suggested that Non-Union Actors and Crew do experience more safety issues because of their lack of experience and we believe that educating them on the inner workings of SAG protocols prior to filming would be beneficial to everyone.

over 40 hours would require overtime for those working beyond the new standard. Unions were working to protect the well-being of the working class.

In December of 1955 The American Federation of Labor and Congress of Industrial Organizations (AFL-CIO) was formed; this organization is the largest union federation in the United States. More than 12.5 million people make up the AFL-CIO. This group represents 58

occur independent of each other, the perception of safety issues can often lead to a reportable incident. Reported incidents from a review of the literature make one question if the designated safety protocols and regulations within the unions are adequate and appropriately enforced, or simply ignored. Despite the existence of safety regulations, accidents and deaths continue to occur in the entertainment industry. US government data presented by the Los Angeles Times illustrated that 19 fatal incidents occurred on film sets across the nation from 2010 to 2019. OSHA reports that 250 film production incidents have occurred since 1990 which include 47 fatalities. The number of fatalities have reached an all time high in the last decade (Stiles-Sakoui, 2021). Do these incidents occur because too much emphasis is placed on money, thus some regulations and requirements are ignored? Do they occur because the regulations are not strict enough and inexperienced non-union people are hired? Has SAG-AFTRA done enough to prevent accidents from occurring? In the last 20 years there have been a number of significant events in Hollywood involving guns and stunts that have occurred on union sets that make one question if safety is at the forefront of SAG-AFTRA and IATSE; it seems exceedingly relevant to analyze : To what extent do SAG-AFTRA productions create a safe work environment for the actors and crew members that work on union sets?

Background

When most people hear the words Hollywood, Actor, or Actress, they think of fame, fortune, and the glamorous life. What they do not realize is that to the majority of actors, it is simply a job, a place of work, just like every other working professional in the United States. Actors are paid a wage, they have expenses associated with that wage, taxes, professional dues and associations, and for many of them, participation in the union. Similar to other unions in

their benefits, their healthcare, and provide a safe working environment. SAG (Screen Actors Guild), was developed in 1933 for professional, working film actors. In 1937, AFTRA (American Federation of Television and Radio Artists) was created as a union to support artists separate from film. After more than 75 years, the two unions merged on March 30, 2012, creating SAG-AFTRA, an all encompassing union (SAG-AFTRA, 2022). SAG-AFTRA is one of the most well-known unions in the country. Anyone who has watched the Academy Awards, may be aware that only active, dues paying SAG-AFTRA members are allowed to vote for the Academy Award nominees. In 2022, 16.6 million people watched the Academy Awards on television (Maas, 2022). With this level of attention, it is easy to see how unlike other unions, SAG-AFTRA membership offers a level of prestige and exclusivity. It is important to understand that membership is not readily available to all working actors, one must be invited to participate

-union actors that have reached their limit

of SAG-AFTRA projects, without being a member of the Union. It is here that the concept of membership in SAG-AFTRA will be developed.

Since its inception in 2012, SAG-AFTRA aggressively fought towards their extensive

...committed to organizing all work done under our

jurisdictions; negotiating the best wages, working conditions, and health and pension benefits; preserving and expanding members' work opportunities; vigorously enforcing our contracts; and protecting memb

membership in SAG-AFTRA are: increased base wages, prestigious gaze, better contracts, pension, structured hours and overtime, and health insurance that varies with work volume. Current membership is 116,741 people and there are 80,440 additional members listed as withdrawn or suspended (SAG-AFTRA, 2022). It is interesting to note that there are nearly as many withdrawn members as there are active members, however, membership in SAG-AFTRA is expensive, and union actors face certain restrictions. While SAG-AFTRA protects the safety and financial aspects of an actor's career, it comes at a cost. Membership in SAG-AFTRA is \$3,000, every 3 years, plus an annual fee of \$201.96. On top of this, an actor must pay the union non-union work. For example, a SAG-AFTRA actor may only audition and work on SAG-AFTRA sets, unless granted an unaccustomed waiver to work on a non-union set; essentially, joining SAG-AFTRA puts you in the ring with top actors, making booking slightly more competitive. If an actor is invited to join this exclusive entity, it is not a decision to be taken lightly. IETQ72omion to be taken

work around the clock, often without meals or breaks. They labored in virtually every department of the theater. After opening night, many stagehands who had worked so hard to load the show were sent on their way, with no promise of future work. They even faced competition from unpaid child labor, as young boys were often enlisted to help work the show or take small individuals represented the first convention of IATSE in order to establish better wages and working conditions for its membership. There are more than 150,000 active members across the United States and Canada, with 362 Local Unions that comprise the rank and file of this group. Each local union has its own dues that are relegated to their specific area. For example, IATSE Local 80 in Burbank dues are \$129.00 per quarter plus a \$3.27 processing fee (IATSE Local 80, 2022). The largest Hollywood Craft-Local is number 44. This union's dues vary by craft and are based on each craft's hourly wage. A property craft member could pay as much as \$7400.00 (Assemble, 2022). IATSE members include: stagehands, wardrobe attendants, scenic artists, front of house workers, hair and makeup artists, designers, production technicians, animators, broadcast technicians, audiovisual technicians, and the list goes on (IATSE, 2022). Unlike SAG-periods, meal breaks, and travel times, just to name a few (Winkie, 2021). As larger problems arise, they are handled by the International President, Matthew Loeb, who has the power and

128-

Nearly 128 years since its inception, the union is still addressing the same issues of unsafe working hours, low wages, and meal breaks.

There should never be live ammunition on a set that involves real guns, and all guns should be loaded with blanks or rubber bullets. Guns should always be secured appropriately and should not be openly available for use on carts. Guns should never be pointed at any individual on a film set during rehearsals or actual filming (Hiraoka, 2003).

So, what went wrong and how can it be fixed? Possibly the first issue is that a real gun was used on a film set in the first place. However, the use of real guns is not uncommon. There are no protocols in place that prohibit the use of real guns, however, a recent petition proposed from Change.org has garnered the signature of union actors and crew members in support of eliminating real guns from SAG-AFTRA productions; this petition has garnered over 19,000 signatures (Kelley, 2021). If SAG-AFTRA were to deny the use of real guns on a union set, this would create a safer work environment for SAG-AFTRA and IATSE members, and it would further advance a safety agenda for all SAG-AFTRA productions. In addition to this issue of real gun use, a plethora of SAG-AFTRA regulations were ignored. Although there was an armorer on real munitions. Many crew members also felt that the armorer lacked experience. This was only her second armorer job, thus she
bulletin. There is common perception in the industry among SAG and IATSE members that non union actors and crew are inexperienced and often lead to on set safety incidents.

Aside from the issues with gun safety, other problems indirectly contributed to this shooting incident. The fact that crew members walked off set because of working conditions is often exceeding 13 hours and delayed paychecks, according to people involved in production. There were at least two accidental gun discharges on the set on Oct. 16, days before the fatal shooting,

Experi

involve stunts. In August of 2017, a stuntwoman, Joi Harris, was killed while filming a motorcycle stunt on the Film Deadpool 2, in British Columbia. Similar to the armorer from woman. Though new to a movie set, she was very skilled with motorcycles. She had been professionally racing motorcycles since 2014. In this particular incident, she had practiced her stunt without failure 5 times before the cameras were rolling. When filming began, Harris lost control of the motorcycle, was ejected and crashed through a glass window (theblerdgurl, 2017). Several veteran stunt coordinators and members of the Stuntmen's Association, Steve Keslo and ys translate to working on a film set. They strongly believed Harris should not have been in that stunt position (Nast, 2017).

the perception of a safety issue has led to a safety incident. To ride a motorcycle on the street is one thing, to ride with a camera crew, special equipment, man made ramps and 15-20 crew members walking around a set while you are riding is a whole different story. Prior to this incident, there had been no issues reported on set. This was a major production with A-list celebrities and a large budget.

this union project. Taft Hartley allows a non-union stunt actor to perform in a SAG-AFTRA project one time, then they must pay and join the union (theblerdgurl, 2017). According to Veteran stuntman Malcolm Murray, this Taft-Hartley experience is quite common, and is how many stunt workers get work and get invited to join SAG. However, just because it is the way things are done, does not make it the right way to do things. It is this lack of experience, much incidents. Murray, still today, believes this could have just been a freak accident.

WorkSafe BC, British Columbia's version of OSHA believes otherwise. They cited the lations.

safety controls in place so that the stunt performer or the motorcycle could not proceed beyond

\$150,000 to \$200,000 per day to have a motion picture company on the street shooting television

Disney, CBS Studios, and FOX network were among those that opted to delay production which kept employees safe, and budgets more predictable.

It is obvious that it took COVID-19, and the financial repercussions affiliated with it to enforce safety officer requirements and require training on all sets, it is possible that safety could be improved in all areas of the industry. In the *Rust* incident, there are many examples where this logic could have prevented tragedy; the inexperienced *non-union* armorer was placed in a position that she was likely not prepared for, which resulted in an unsafe working environment. Saving a few dollars by hiring less experienced personnel is not worth endangering someone's safety, comfortability, or life; do it right the first time. The Stuntman's situation is very similar. Joi, a new, non-union, inexperienced stuntwoman, is thrown in a last minute job where there is and might have delayed production. Is it merely a coincidence that both of these tragedies occurred because of inexperienced non-union individuals and lack of following union protocols on union sets? This is something that must be looked into in order to mitigate further risk. Again, saving a few dollars by hiring non-

unions made to ensure safe filming such as masks, distancing and smaller film crews. The article highlights the importance of the actors' labor and th will likely contribute to greater vigilance on set and potentially help protect other actors and experience to improve budgeting and hire appropriate personnel, continue to ensure that Safety Officers are onset and that safety regulations are followed for all productions so that everyone is safe on every union project.

In the study, Failure Mapping for Occupational Safety Management in the Film and of accidents or harm to health of actors and crew-members is not improbable, because a tradition exists of putting production above h acknowledges that there are regulations in place, however, low budget films rarely follow them. They also note that there is a lack of reliable data available in the industry and a lack of literature social media (magazines, newspapers, television programs, e

control of the material used for filming special effects. The study concluded that this mapping of failures in the industry had the potential to minimize accidents. If more studies were conducted and more focus was placed on these identified issues, it is likely that changes would occur quicker in the industry.

Overall, SAG-AFTRA has done a significant job in preventing accidents in the industry. When one considers that 47 fatalities have occurred in 23 years, the number is actually quite

Harassment. Thus, creating safety and the perception of safety includes minimizing as well as eliminating the safety issues defined above.

This study was conducted in partnership with the Urban and Environmental Policy Department at Occidental College. The survey examines health and safety issues within the entertainment industry both on, and off camera, with a focus on perception of safety incidents as it relates to Union and Non-Union cast and crew on Union and Non-Union sets. Further, some

California. However, I am reporting separately on the entire group of participants as well as those that worked on sets with perceived safety issues.

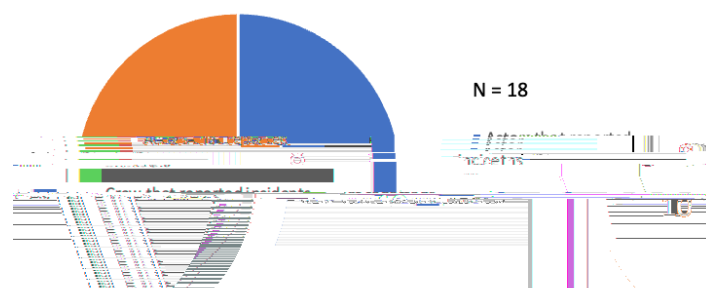
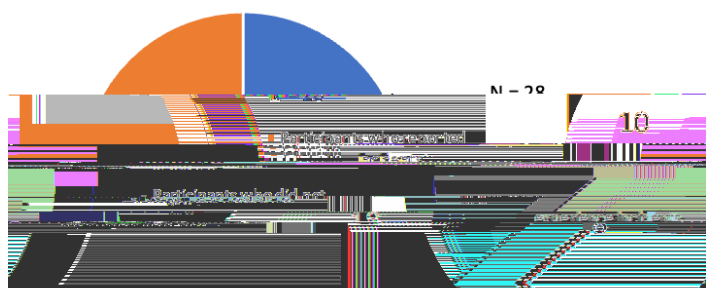
By survey, I asked participants about their Union affiliation with Sag-Aftra and IATSE. I specifically asked both groups about their feelings of safety while working on a film and or television set. My focus is the analysis of those respondents that had incidents on set in order to capture the issues that exist on set and possibly identify how to improve safety. I further breakdown Union vs Non-Union participants as well as Union and Non-Union sets as Union sets have strict regulations that are followed in order to protect actors and crew members and Non-Union sets simply follow best practices. Non-Union sets have no regulations or protocols in place to protect actors and crew members other than those stated by OSHA which are not film industry specific.

I also summarized important factors that might pertain to perceived safety issues on set. Were the respondents aware of a safety officer on set, were issues reported as they occurred on set, was the project a low, scale, or high budget project, which type of project did they feel safer on (Union or Non-Union) and did they generally have a feeling of safety while working on a project, T.8 0 612 79

member group was 4 Union crew and 10 Non-Union crew. I had 16 men and 12 women respond with an age range of 19-60 (See *Table 1*). In my further dissection of the data I did not consider age and gender because of my small sample size, I felt that it would not have a significant r value.

Table 1: Characteristics of survey respondents self reporting aged 19-60 years living in California

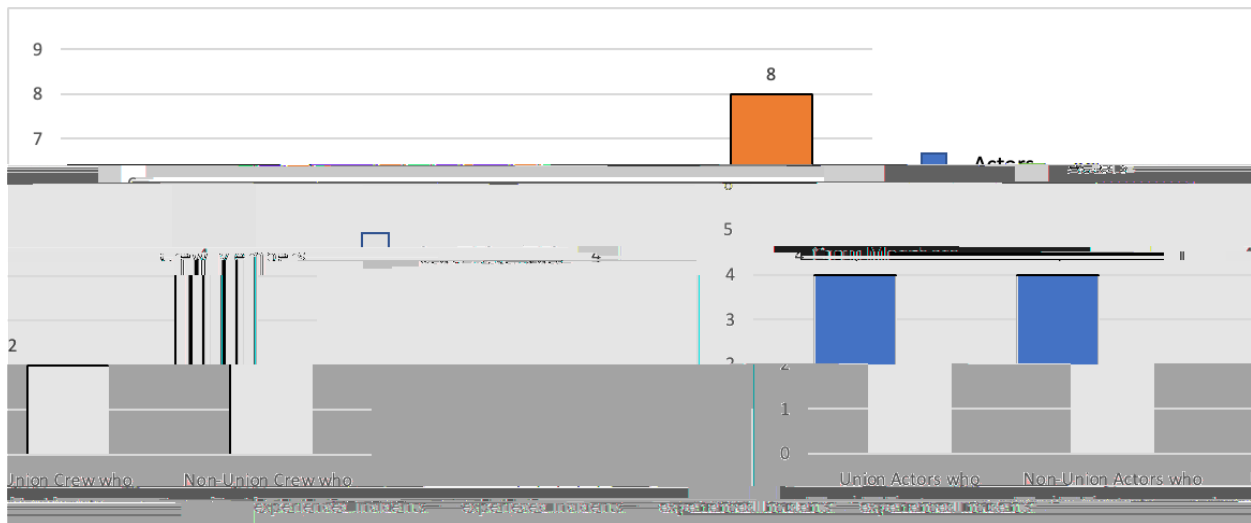
| | ACTOR | CREWMEMBER | Total |
|---|-------|------------|-------|
| N | 14 | 14 | 28 |



Non-

The focus of this breakdown is those respondents that specifically reported perceptions of safety incidents on set. This group of 18 was further reduced to the Participants' Union status. The actors were distributed evenly, 4 representing the Union while the other 4 were designated as Non-Union. The crew members showed a more significant difference, 2 were Union while 8 were Non-Union crew members. (Figure 3)

Figure 3: Union status breakdown of Actor / Crew Perceived Incidents

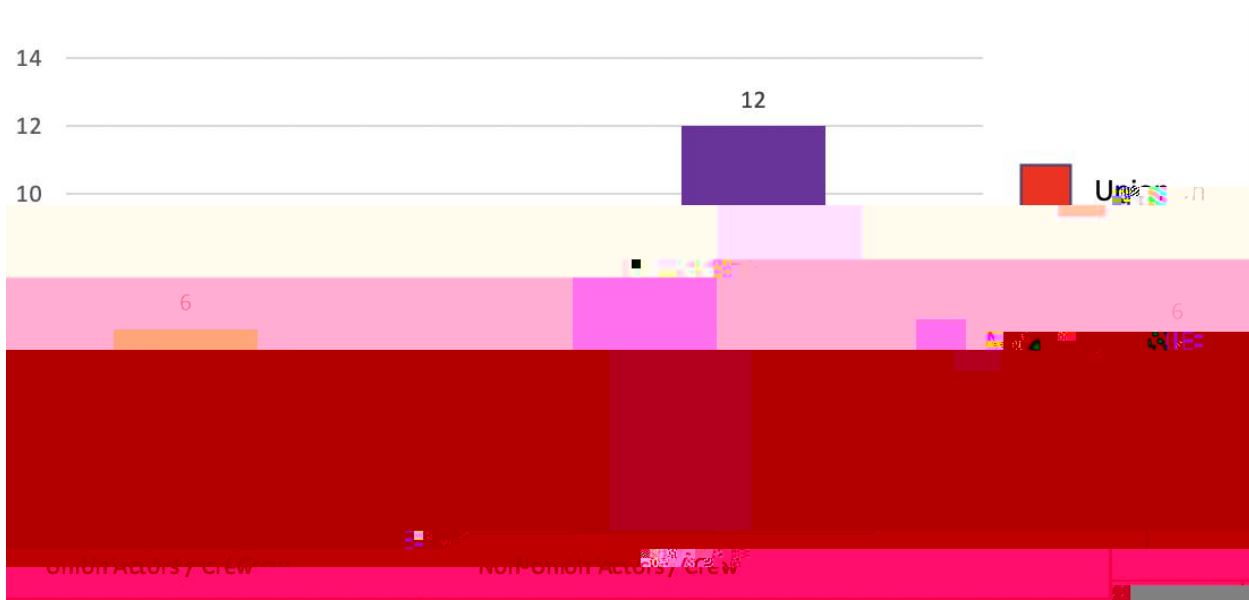


Non-

The focus of this breakdown is those respondents that specifically perceived incidents on set. This group of 18 was further reduced to the Project's Union status. Of the 18 projects with

perceived incidents, 6 of the 18 projects were Union projects while the other 12 were Non-Union projects. (Figure 4)

Figure 4: Perceived Incident rate by project status (Union / Non-Union)

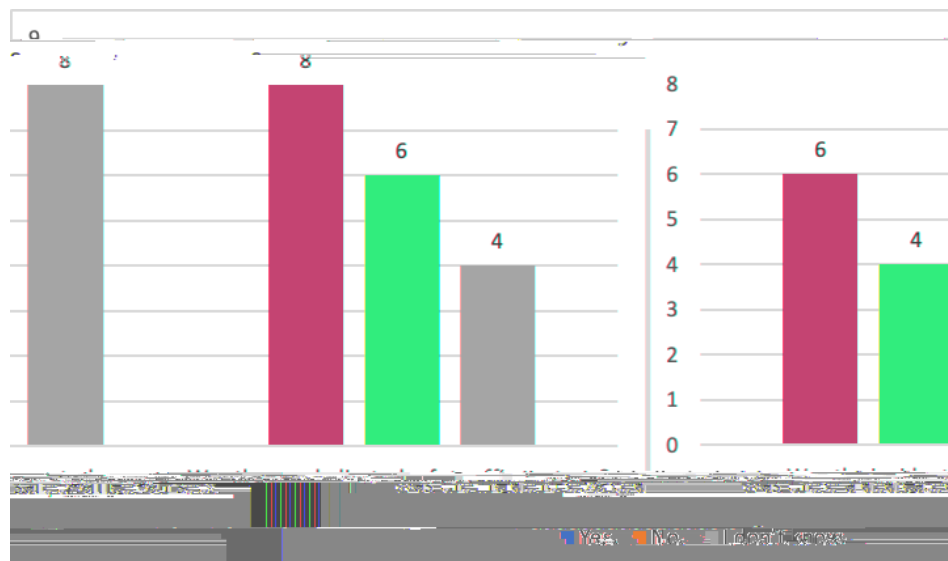


Differences in budgets and Safety - Scale Budget Notes Highest Incidence Rate



Other factors related to Safety

While my primary focus was on Union and Non-Union status of the participant, Union and Non-Union status of the project and the financial budget, there are other factors that were important when addressing safety in film and television. With perceived incidents on projects it is important to know if a dedicated safety officer existed on set and were the issues reported as they occurred. The group of 18 that perceived incidents had varying levels of knowledge on these issues. Of those reported, 6 stated that incidents were perceived, 4 said that incidents were not reported and 8 did not know if the incidents were reported at all. In regards to a dedicated



Categorizing incidents

My purpose was to learn about actors and crew members' experiences on a film or television set as it relates to perceptions of safety. The analysis p

Comparing participants Union status

The number of Union member incidents as compared to Non-Union member incidents is of significance. SAG-AFTRA and IATSE both state that membership in their Unions promotes better wages, better benefits and better safety. While the data for actors did not follow this Union membership belief, the crew member data had a strong correlation. Union and Non-Union actors were equally divided at 50% each in their perception of incidents. The expectation would have been that a Non-Union actor's perception would have been higher in regard to incidents as they primarily work on Non-Union projects, and since Non-

[Main Character] Opponent. This guy was part of the boxing gym we were filming at, so we knew he could pull off the role of a real boxer, but once the cameras started rolling, he actually started to hit Ross, and we were all kind of
~~JHWWKGRWDFWDOO~~*were all kind*

possibly change the outcome of incidents on said Union project. This idea is definitely something to consider in the future of film and television.

Comparing budgets

The data did not reflect at all along my expectations of budget level and perceptions of safety incidents on set. The data showed that 9/17 of scale or mid size budgets had perceived safety issues. Low budget films followed with 5/17, while high budgets had 3/17 perceived incidents. I was expecting that low budget projects would have the most significant level of perceived safety issues because these projects typically hire Non-Union, inexperienced actors and crew. These projects also move quicker with short turnaround and rules and regulations are often overlooked as there is less capital to add an extra day of shooting. Through my personal experience on a Non-Union low budget film, we consistently went past the 12 hour day mark and shot scenes late into the night in order to make sure we did not have to come back the next day to finish just a few hours of work. Adding another day would have cost production extra pay for everyone involved. These late night shoots in the chilly Los Angeles winter as well as working in skid row made me, and the rest of the cast and crew, feel quite fearful of our safety. We were more focused on our safety than our job. Since we were not aware we would be shooting this late into the evening, most individuals on set did not come prepared with warm clothing or jackets to wear in between scenes. The majority of us were left to huddle together while in between scenes, and it was a seemingly dangerous experience. This survey's data ranking low budget films at only 5/17 perceived safety incidents was quite surprising.

Limitations

The characteristics of the survey participants limited our outreach. Actors and crew members work very extensive and unorthodox hours, thus, receiving a response from a survey or scheduling an interview during their ever changing shoot dates make them nearly impossible to reach. Having knowledge of this information going into the research, I tried to combat this issue by assigning a page at the end of my survey to encouraging respondents to send it onto their peers and other cast and crew mates in the industry. Although this attempt at a snowball sample was put forth in my survey, as well as in my interviews, I did not receive a single survey response from anyone I did not personally engage. SAG-AFTRA has a membership of roughly 160,000, and IATSE has a membership of roughly 168,000, thus my survey of 28 members was very small. Although these Unions have an immense population of members, the largest limitation of my survey dissemination was the outreach process. Attempting to engage with actors and crew who are socially famous is difficult when you are simply one of the hundreds of messages they get each day. Due to these limitations, my sample size was quite small, however not insignificant.

Impression

interactive training module online to educate and provide instruction to all non union actors and crew on the protocols and requirements necessary to work on union sets. Incorporating these practices will create a safer working environment for all.

Appendix:

1A: Survey Questions:

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

19. How would you rate your safety experience on a non-union project. (1 being very unsafe, 10 being very safe)

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

20. If you have worked on both non-union and union projects, which do you feel were safer?

Union

Non-Union

21. Do you think non union sets lack professionalism and safety? (1 being absolutely not, 10 being absolutely yes)

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

22. How would you improve safety on set? (open ended question)

____ Open Ended ____

23. If SAG-AFTRA Actors cannot work on a non union project, do you feel non union members should be able to work on a SAG-AFTRA production?

Yes

No

Maybe

24. Please Rank the following in order of importance (1 being most important and 5 being least)

1B: Interview Questions

- IATSE, The Union Behind Entertai

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