

Report the Vote #9

Personal safety, cyber-harassment, troubleshooting

Thanks for being here, I'm Lisa Loving and this is Report the Vote, workshop #9 Personal Safety. Brought to you by the Pacifica Affiliate Network and WNUC LPFM in Detroit – and Pacifica.

In this workshop we cover crucial reporting skills, but this is just one episode of a series. Look for the others online, we're creating them one at a time and [posting them here](#).

SPECIAL NOTE #1: If you are working on elections coverage, I am heading up a new twice-monthly national radio show designed to carry your reporting. Would you like your work to reach a national audience? Email me! I am at lisaloving33@gmail.com. We're starting at the end of this month and running this show through the first week of January! Please and please again, I need your submissions to make this real. How can I work with you?

SPECIAL NOTE #2 I have a case of my journalism books and if you send me an email I'll mail one to you for free. Because you guys are defending democracy! Two folks have requested a copy but I wanted to get more people on board before I head to the Post Office. Email me your snail mail at lisaloving33@gmail.com.

Read to the bottom for more links to helpful resources.

PERSONAL SAFETY

I've always said that journalists are like cops and lawyers – everybody hates us until they desperately need us.

The threat against reporters is real. Violence comes from random people in public spaces and also sometimes from law enforcement. Cyberbullies now have the power of AI. No matter how hard you try, you *will* make a mistake – what do you do in that situation?

I've broken this workshop down into three parts: cyberthreats, physical violence, and troubleshooting when something goes wrong with your work.

Ugh I feel anxious just writing that down lol. But the truth is, we as journalists are stronger when we organize professionally and build relationships with each other.

Probably the most important takeaway you'll have from this workshop is that community is the only force that can protect you when things go wrong: your professional community and your local community of readers. When I say to be relational, not transactional, this is at the core of why that's important.

Because journalists cause trouble! Sometimes that's even our job. But it's possible to be prepared for that.

CYBER THREATS

You could experience a ransomware attack; your website might be hacked; you might get a violent threat, or multiple violent threats. Take a little time to think about what might happen if you were harassed. Write it down.

- Make a plan in advance for how to respond to each of the things on your list before these things happen. Write it down or document it so that multiple people can follow it if need be.

→ It can be as simple as:

- CALL JOE THE TECH GUY WHO IS THE OFFICIAL DEDICATED EMERGENCY TECH (you might find an emergency tech before you need one just make it your business to ask around and find a person who does this work).
- Or EVERYONE EXITS OFFICE WITH PERSONAL GEAR AND MEETS UP ACROSS THE STREET IN THE CLOWN THEATER PARKING LOT WHILE SUSAN CALLS POLICE. (side note: At KBOO we made an emergency plan stipulating NOT to call the police – you can see why it's important to make a plan, even if it's the simplest thing.)
- IF SOMETHING HAPPENS AT THE CONVENTION ALL TEAM MEMBERS MEET AT THE PUB AT 4TH AND VINE.
- Whatever it is – write it down and have a simple plan. If you put it on a piece of paper with phone numbers you will not be paranoid—you'll be prepared. This also helps keep you from *over-reacting* in times of chaos and high emotion.

→ But write it down, visualize yourself carrying it out. Own it. If you take the hour at most to do these tasks, if and when the crisis hits you'll be glad.

- Michelle Ferrier runs Trollbusters, [a service to help vulnerable journalists](#) – especially women, LGBTQI2 and POC reporters targeted by online harassment, [check out her website here](#).

PHYSICAL VIOLENCE

We just talked about how cyber criminality and physical violence can be linked.

- Create a policy for your newsroom or your reporting team or your radio station to make a note of violent threats via digital media; include dates. This info might be important in future legal action – in my town, the people most likely to do this are neo-nazis, and at least some have actually been prosecuted. **Many people just shrug this off but it's important to acknowledge the situation so that staff and volunteers feel supported instead of shrugging and acting like that's normal.**
- Decide in advance whether your team wants to report incidents like these to authorities or not. Decide this in advance, do not wait until it happens. But even if you do not report it you can still keep track of the incidents for your own information.
- If you are part of a team reporting from an event or location, make a plan for where/how to meet up – ESPECIALLY IF THERE ARE CROWD-CONTROL WEAPONS BEING DEPLOYED BY THE POLICE. You will also text your team, but decide on a place in advance of any chaos. Tear gas, flash-bang grenades, “less lethal” bullets or beanbags, any of that constitutes crowd control weapons.

- Where I live in Oregon, the most common form of violence that journalists face is from the police. Public Radio reporter April Erlich was covering the aftermath of wildfires that destroyed an entire town – police arrested her, threw her in jail, and [later all charges were dropped](#). Specifically, they were at a “homeless camp” of wildfire refugees in a parking lot. Not an event.

----> decide in advance if you and/or your team plan to challenge authorities when they start kettling journalists in a separate location – this is very common. If you decide to challenge the police’s “riot act” designation, **figure out in advance what you’re doing with any equipment you’re carrying**, especially memory chips from digital media. Look out for police/others who might try to break your equipment.

- I was stunned to see what a great guide to reporter safety that this dank corporate entity published, [well worth a read](#)

[Police Keep Injuring Journalists Covering Portland Protests](#)
[Portland approves \\$50K settlement to freelance journalist struck by police during protest](#)

MORE SOURCES

[Digital and physical threats to journalists are connected.](#)

[Center for News Technology and Innovation report](#)

The Thompson Reuters Foundation put together an entire website of [separate guides to coping with different kinds of cyber harassment](#), definitely take the time to stroll down this homepage. Look for the downloadable Know Your Rights Guide.

[April Erlich charges dropped 2022](#)

[Troll Busters.com](#)

[2024 World Press Freedom Index – journalism under political pressure](#)

[PEN AMERICA’S KNOW YOUR RIGHTS VIDEO](#)

[Zimbabwe: Elections reporting and peace journalism manual](#)

[THE COMMITTEE FOR THE PROTECTION OF JOURNALISTS’ “SAFETY KIT”](#)

[THE COMMITTEE FOR THE PROTECTION OF JOURNALISTS’ GUIDELINES ON COVERING PROTESTS OVER POLICE VIOLENCE](#)

[Purdue University Communications Dept, The Three Most Effective Crisis Communications Strategies](#)