



# Training and Grants Department

## Picket Line Safety Guidance Document

### Introduction

This guidance document has been developed by the Teamsters Training and Grants Department to help Teamster local union leadership, organizers, Teamster participants, and external supporters plan and organize picket lines in a way that ensures the health and safety of all involved in picketing actions. As unions, we know that injuries and illnesses can be prevented in the workplace with the addition of a robust safety and health plan and system, and the same applies to the picket line. In many cases, however, the nature of picket lines, the added stress and tension that comes with job action, and the challenges posed by environmental conditions such as weather can all present unique hazards that participants should consider. These hazards may require extra special attention and new approaches to participants' health and safety during a picket, strike, or lockout<sup>1</sup>.

This guide is intended to assist leaders and organizers in applying a health and safety framework to picket line planning to prevent injuries and illnesses from occurring. This guide is not intended to serve as legal advice, however, and Local Union leadership should always consult with local counsel prior to initiating any picket line.

The guidance document is organized as follows:

1. Review of Potential Hazards and Control Measures
2. Hygienic Practices
3. Hazard Assessment on-site
4. Community and Law Enforcement Interactions
5. Communication Before and During Picketing
6. Safety Planning for the Picket Line
7. First Aid and Emergency Response

---

<sup>1</sup> MFL Guide to Health & Safety on the Picket Line - <https://mfl.ca/wp-content/uploads/2023/03/MFL-Guide-to-Health-and-Safety-on-the-Picket-Line-Feb-2023.pdf>



# Picket Line Safety Guidance Document

## Potential Hazards on the Picket Line and Control Measures

### Environmental Hazards

Weather conditions vary depending on the time of the year and are a very important consideration in health and safety planning for picket lines to keep the momentum going without interruption, come rain or shine, wind or snow, hot or cold. Participants can experience a wide range of discomfort, injury, or illness due to weather if precautions are not taken, so **it's important to have people assigned to monitor weather (short-term and long-term) forecasts** and to make sure that participants are advised about expected weather conditions and how to dress/prepare appropriately. It's also good practice for picket line organizers to have extra supplies of outdoor gear (like ponchos) and supplies in case participants forget or are unprepared. Picket Captains should be trained on how to recognize the early signs of weather-exposure injuries/illness and be sure to check in with participants regularly during difficult weather to make sure they're okay or see if they need some relief.

During **hot weather** conditions, picket line participants should determine how well prepared they are (i.e., are you acclimated<sup>2</sup> to being outdoors for an extended period) and determine if there is a need to limit picket duty in extreme weather to avoid injury and illnesses (e.g., dehydration, heat stroke, and sunburn). Before heading to and during the picket, participants can use the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) and National Institute of Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) Heat Safety Tool App<sup>3</sup> for real-time information on temperature throughout the day at their specific location. In hot weather, participants should consider wearing personal cooling systems (e.g., cooling vests, cooling neck towels, and wetted overgarments). See Teamster Training and Grants Fact Sheet on Protecting Workers in Hot Environments<sup>4</sup>.

**Preparation tip: On hot days, picket line organizers need to provide shade, supply water, encourage participants to use sunscreen (and insect repellent if required), and remind participants to dress accordingly. Depending on how high the temperature climbs and how well-prepared participants are, there may be a need to limit picket duty during extreme heat to avoid injury/illness.**

In **cold weather** conditions (rain/snow and ice) it is important to remember that winter clothing adequate for short periods will not be appropriate for a multi-hour shift on the picket line. Cold weather exposure can cause severe injuries and illnesses, including frostbite and hypothermia. Frostbite is likely to affect the nose, cheeks, ears, and chin. In severe cases, it extends to the fingers, feet, and hands. Hypothermia is when the body loses heat faster than it produces, resulting in a body temperature below 95 degrees Fahrenheit. Most adults' normal

---

<sup>2</sup> Acclimated: **Acclimatization** is a process by which a person gradually increases their exposure time in hot environmental conditions, causing beneficial physiological changes to prevent heat-related illnesses by properly regulating body temperature.

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.cdc.gov/niosh/topics/heatstress/heatapp.html>

<sup>4</sup> Protecting Workers in Hot Environments - [https://teamstersafety.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/08/Heat-Stress-Fact-Sheet-2021\\_508.pdf](https://teamstersafety.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/08/Heat-Stress-Fact-Sheet-2021_508.pdf)



# Picket Line Safety Guidance Document

body temperature is 98.6 degrees Fahrenheit. Access to good thermal clothing and warmth from bonfires do not mitigate the hazard presented by hypothermia.

It is important to have access to a warming station and leaders should regularly check on participants. In the cold weather, participants should consider wearing layers of loose-fitting and insulated clothes. Gloves, hats, boots, and jackets should be insulated and waterproof. See OSHA Protecting Workers from Cold Stress Quick Card<sup>5</sup>.

**Preparation Tip: Rainy and snowy weather presents the difficult challenge of staying dry and warm. Providing a stable shelter that keeps participants dry is a necessity during rainy and snowy days, as it is difficult to keep someone warm when they are wet. Picketers must be prepared for wet weather and are advised to always bring waterproof/ water-resistant apparel and proper footwear to the picket line. Ice can make walking a picket line difficult and dangerous. Ensuring that there are shovels and salt/sand preventative measures to reduce the risk of slips and falls on the picket line is a necessity. Icy conditions may also warrant setting picketers farther from traffic to keep picketers away from drivers who are navigating slippery road conditions. Treating minor cold weather-related distress may be as simple as getting an affected member to a warm place, staying dry, and hydrating.**

Outdoor smoke from wildfires. Checking the Air Quality Index (AQI)<sup>6</sup> can provide leaders with information on when air pollution is likely to reach levels that could be harmful to human health. Smoke levels can change a lot during the day, so wait until the air quality is better before you are active outdoors. Picket-like organizers may want to limit protests when the AQI is above 151.

## ***Physical hazards***

- **Visibility.** It is recommended that if a picket line is near traffic, picketers use some form of high-visibility personal protection equipment (PPE). One of the goals on the picket line is to be visible to everyone, so taking the precaution and wearing PPE serves a health & safety purpose as well as a public visibility purpose. Visibility issues are most common at night but are also possible at dawn and dusk, depending on the environmental conditions (such as fog or haze created by excessive smoke). It is recommended that during these periods, Picket Captains assess the hazard and modify their line appropriately. Although participants may be wearing union gear or carrying union flags, **reflective PPE should be considered**, especially during low visibility periods.
- **Noise is a hazard.** Prolonged exposure to high noise levels from excessive use of a megaphone or bullhorn can result in hearing loss, which is irreversible. Participants, especially those using the megaphone, should consider **using earplugs**, which may reduce sound exposure by fifteen (15) to thirty (30) decibels.

---

<sup>5</sup> OSHA Protecting Workers from Cold Stress Quick Card - <https://www.osha.gov/sites/default/files/publications/OSHA3156.pdf>

<sup>6</sup> Air Quality Index (AQI) - <https://www.airnow.gov/>



# Picket Line Safety Guidance Document

- **Traffic/Access Hazards.** Often there is not much choice as to where a picket line will be set-up, due to the need for visibility in front of the workplace/employer. Depending on the location, participants may face hazards accessing the picket site itself, such as busy roads, highways, poor lighting, ditches, or walk-up driveways that are still being used by vehicles. **Picket sites should always have safe access ways, and if necessary, these should be clearly marked by pylons, traffic cones, or other markers.** Picket line organizers should consider whether 'safe arrival and departure procedures are required to keep participants safe. Picket Captains should remind picketers to always be aware of their surroundings.
- **Insects.** Summer insects including ticks can be more than annoying; bites and stings can lead to serious illnesses. In addition to the pain and swelling from insect stings, in some people stings can cause life-threatening allergic reactions. Or victims may be infected with more serious diseases or bacteria. Hornets, wasps, and yellow jackets can sting repeatedly. Bees sting only once but leave behind a barbed stinger and poison sac that keeps pumping venom. This must be removed as quickly as possible.

**Preparation Tip: Avoid colognes, perfumes, perfumed soaps, and strongly scented shampoos and deodorants. Wear clothing to cover as much of the body as possible. Remain calm and still if a single stinging insect is flying around. (Swatting may cause it to sting. If attacked by several stinging insects, run to get away. Workers with a history of severe allergic reactions to insect bites or stings should carry an epinephrine autoinjector and wear medical ID jewelry stating their allergy.**

**Use repellents that contain 20 to 30% DEET (N, N-diethyl-m-toluamide) on exposed skin and clothing for protection that lasts up to several hours. Use products that contain permethrin on clothing. Treat clothing and gear, such as boots, pants, socks, and tents, with products containing 0.5% permethrin. It remains protective through several washings.**

## ***Chemical Hazards***

Chemical crowd control agents are also referred to as riot control agents and are mainly used by civil authorities and government agencies to curtail civil disobedience gatherings or processions by large crowds. Riot control agents (sometimes referred to as "tear gas") are chemical compounds that temporarily make people unable to function by causing irritation to the eyes, mouth, throat, lungs, and skin. Common riot control agents used to disperse large numbers of individuals into smaller, more easily controllable numbers include chloroacetophenone (CN), chlorobenzylidenemalononitrile (CS), dibenzoxazepine (CR), bromobenzylcyanide (CA), diphenylaminearsine, and oleoresin capsicum-pepper spray (OC).<sup>7</sup>

---

<sup>7</sup> Menezes RG, Hussain SA, Rameez MA, Kharoshah MA, Madadin M, Anwar N, Senthilkumaran S. Chemical crowd control agents. Med Leg J. 2016 Mar;84(1):22-5. doi: 10.1177/0025817215622314. Epub 2015 Dec 10. PMID: 26658556.



# Picket Line Safety Guidance Document

Because chemicals are liquids or solids (for example, powder), riot control agents such as CN and CS could be released in the air as fine droplets or particles. If agents are released into the air, people could be exposed to them through skin contact, eye contact, or breathing. The extent of poisoning caused by riot control agents depends on the amount a person was exposed to, the location of exposure (indoors versus outdoors), how the person was exposed, and the length of time of the exposure. Riot control agents work by irritating the area of contact (for example, eyes, skin, nose) within seconds of exposure. The effects of exposure to a riot control agent are usually short-lived (15–30 minutes) after the person has been removed from the source and decontaminated (cleaned off).

People exposed to riot control agents may experience some or all of the following symptoms immediately after exposure:

- Eyes: excessive tearing, burning, blurred vision, redness
- Nose: runny nose, burning, swelling
- Mouth: burning, irritation, difficulty swallowing, drooling
- Lungs: chest tightness, coughing, choking sensation, noisy breathing (wheezing), shortness of breath
- Skin: burns, rash
- Other: nausea and vomiting

Long-lasting exposure or exposure to a large dose of riot control agent, especially in a closed setting, may cause severe effects such as the following:

- Blindness
- Glaucoma (a serious eye condition that can lead to blindness)
- Immediate death due to severe chemical burns to the throat and lungs
- Respiratory failure, possibly resulting in death

Since inhalation is likely to be the primary route of exposure, leave the area where the riot control agents were released and get to fresh air. Quickly moving to an area where fresh air is available is highly effective in reducing exposure to riot control agents.

- If the riot control agents were released outdoors, move away from the area where the agents were released. Avoid dense, low-lying clouds of riot control agent vapor.
- Go to the highest ground possible, because riot control agents will form a dense vapor cloud that can travel close to the ground.

If you are exposed to riot control agents, you should remove your clothing, rapidly wash your entire body with soap and water, and get medical care as quickly as possible.

- Quickly take off clothing that may have a riot control agent on it. Any clothing that has to be pulled over the head should be cut off the body instead of pulled over the head.
- If you are helping other people remove their clothing, try to avoid touching any contaminated areas, and remove the clothing as quickly as possible.
- As quickly as possible, wash any riot control agent from your skin with large amounts of soap and water. Washing with soap and water will help protect people from any chemicals on their bodies.



# Picket Line Safety Guidance Document

- If your eyes are burning or your vision is blurred, rinse your eyes with plain water for 10 to 15 minutes. If you wear contacts, remove them, and put them with the contaminated clothing. Do not put the contacts back in your eyes (even if they are not disposable contacts). If you wear eyeglasses, wash them with soap and water. You can put your eyeglasses back on after you wash them. If you are wearing jewelry that you can wash with soap and water, you can wash it and put it back on.
- After you have washed yourself, place your clothing inside a plastic bag. Avoid touching contaminated areas of the clothing. If you can't avoid touching contaminated areas, or you aren't sure where the contaminated areas are, wear rubber gloves, turn the bag inside out, and use it to pick up the clothes (inverting the bag over the clothes when you have all the clothes picked up), or put the clothes in the bag using tongs, tool handles, sticks, or similar objects. Anything that touches the contaminated clothing should also be placed in the bag.

Treatment consists of helping the affected person get more oxygen in his or her blood and stopping agent-caused chemical burns from getting worse. Medications that are used to treat asthma (such as bronchodilators and steroids) may also be used to help the person breathe. Eye exposures are treated by rinsing the eyes with water until there is no evidence of riot control agents in the eyes. No antidote exists for poisoning from riot control agents. Burn injuries to the skin are treated with standard burn management techniques, including the use of medicated bandages.

**Preparation tip: If gas masks are not handy, use N95 facemasks, or scarves/ bandanas large enough to cover the face from nose to chin. Use eye protection like swim goggles and wear clothing that covers as much of the skin as possible, ensuring you have an additional change of clothes.**

**Wear comfortable, closed, protective shoes and avoid wearing contact lenses, which can trap irritating chemicals such as tear gas powders. Bring water with a squirt top to drink but also to wash off skin or eyes.**

## ***Biological Hazards***

Infectious diseases are disorders caused by organisms such as bacteria and viruses. Examples are SARS-CoV-2 (COVID-19) and the norovirus ("stomach flu"). The chances of transmission of infectious diseases are likely when specific conditions are met such as prolonged/close contact with others and the lack of hygienic practices such as handwashing and physical distancing. Signs and symptoms can vary depending on what is causing the infection but often include fever and fatigue<sup>8</sup>. Participants should not attend the picket line if they have a fever (temperature of 100.5F or higher), sore throat, body aches, diarrhea, fatigue, and coughing. They should also consider the use of face coverings (e.g., N95 respirator) as a form of protection from potential biological hazards

---

<sup>8</sup> Infectious Diseases - <https://www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/infectious-diseases/symptoms-causes/syc-20351173>



# Picket Line Safety Guidance Document

while participating on the picket line. See Teamsters Training and Grants Health Fact Sheet on Respiratory Protection<sup>9</sup>.

**Preparation tip: Bring hand sanitizer and use it regularly throughout the protest, especially after touching common-use signs, placards, noisemakers, or megaphones. Wash your hands with soap and water when available. Wear a facemask if you are vulnerable or if you live with someone whose health or age makes them vulnerable. Consider vaccination.**

## ***Ergonomic Hazards***

Be aware of the physical weight of all equipment used on the picket line which includes signs, banners, and displays that are used by participants. Be careful to reduce the occurrence of splinters from wooden signposts. The equipment should be designed to reduce and/or prevent injury and harm. During the picket, participants should be aware of the signs and symptoms of fatigue, short-term or long-term pain, and repetitive actions that could potentially cause injury to their bodies.

## **Hygienic Practices to Adopt During and After the Picket Line**

Adopting effective personal hygienic behaviors can help reduce the spread of disease. Handwashing is one of the best ways to protect oneself and the community from getting sick. Germs spread when: (1) people touch their eyes, nose, and mouth with unwashed hands; (2) prepare or eat food and drinks with unwashed hands; (3) touch surfaces or objects that have germs on them; and (4) blow their nose, cough, or sneeze into their hands and then touch other people's hands or common objects<sup>10</sup>.

Participants should cover coughs and sneezes with tissues and keep their hands clean to help prevent the spread of serious respiratory illnesses like influenza, respiratory syncytial virus (RSV), whooping cough, and COVID-19.

All used tissues should be thrown in the trash. When there isn't a tissue, cough into the elbow and not in the hands<sup>11</sup>. When available (if a designated restroom is identified), wash hands with soap and water for at least twenty (20) seconds. If soap and water are unavailable, only use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer containing at least 60% alcohol<sup>12</sup>. Hand sanitizers do not remove all types of germs, nor do they remove harmful chemicals. Therefore, to help minimize the spread of germs, always bring your food.

Participants should always take care of themselves while engaging in picketing. When taking rest breaks during extreme heat, use your wet towels and clothing to cool down, and use your deodorant. When done with picketing for the day, change all clothes, shower, and disinfect your belongings. The CDC recommends<sup>13</sup> the use of the warmest appropriate water setting when washing clothing and drying all items completely. Washing

---

<sup>9</sup> Respiratory Protection - <https://teamstersafety.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/11/respirator-protection.pdf>

<sup>10</sup> CDC Keeping Hands Clean - <https://www.cdc.gov/hygiene/personal-hygiene/hands.html>

<sup>11</sup> <https://www.cdc.gov/hygiene/personal-hygiene/coughing-sneezing.html>

<sup>12</sup> <https://www.cdc.gov/hygiene/personal-hygiene/coughing-sneezing.html>

<sup>13</sup> <https://www.cdc.gov/hygiene/cleaning/facility.html>





# Picket Line Safety Guidance Document

clothing including re-usable face coverings can prevent any potential skin contamination. When disinfecting or cleaning electronics, it is recommended that the manufacturer's instructions are followed, and the use of a wipeable cover on electronics is considered, which makes cleaning and disinfecting easier.

## ***Hazard Assessment On-Site***

To identify and assess hazards, the leaders and participants of the picket line should:

- Step 1: Collect and review information about the potential hazards present or likely to be present during a picket.
- Step 2: The leaders and participants of the picket line should plan a site visit to the location of the picket to complete an inspection to determine if they can discover existing and potentially new hazards at the site.
- Step 3: The leaders and participants of the picket line could then determine the severity and likelihood of hazards causing incidents and create strategies (plans) to eliminate or reduce the chances for each hazard to cause harm.
- Step 4: The leaders and participants of the picket line should practice the picket line structure before the picket and work together (in solidarity) to make changes that best suit the participants of the picket line. It is always a good idea to conduct an assessment after the first day/ week to determine what is working and what may need to change to ensure participant health and safety.

## **Community and Law Enforcement Interactions**

**Crowd Safety.** It is paramount that while picketing, avoid blocking or preventing the movement or access of others. If violence ensues and/or the crowd becomes congested, or participants feel unsafe, remove yourself from the situation. If needed, consider rearranging the next meeting location to a safer area. Crowd safety<sup>14</sup> is an integral part of being on picket. While awareness of one's surroundings is important, look out for others and assist those in danger. Call for law enforcement help to assist in de-escalating the situation<sup>15</sup>. When in crowded and violent situations, the likelihood of medical emergencies requires that participants are readily available to assist the most vulnerable. The picket line hazards make these emergencies likely, and that's why participants should consider crowd safety strategies, such as (1) keeping arms free instead of pinned on the side; (2) keeping a wide-spread footing to reinforce balance and prevent falls; (3) moving with the crowd instead of remaining still; and (3) warning others about obstacles in their path, holes in the pavement, and any other tripping hazards.

**Stay Vigilant.** While on the picket line, harassment is likely as these environments can become unsafe quickly. There may be drive-by hecklers looking to incite violence or simply harass. Avoid engaging with these individuals to avoid escalation of the situation. Keep vigilant and know the exit routes should participants need to leave quickly.

---

<sup>14</sup> Yale University, How to Stay Safe and Healthy at a Public Demonstration: <https://secretary.yale.edu/student-life/staying-safe-and-healthy-public-demonstration-or-march>

<sup>15</sup> <https://www.aclu.org/know-members-rights/stopped-by-police>





# Picket Line Safety Guidance Document

**Law Enforcement.** Everyone has the right to peacefully assemble in public spaces under the First Amendment of the U.S. Constitution<sup>16</sup>. Due to this right, law enforcement authorities should facilitate the peaceful assembly. It may be good to contact law enforcement before the event to alert them of the group's plans and be sure to designate someone to be a liaison with responding law enforcement. During instances of an arrest, participants can document the arrest and actions by law enforcement authorities, including the use of excessive force. Participants have rights which include asking why participants are being detained, requesting access to a lawyer, and calling a family via phone. Learn more about participant's rights: [Know Participants Rights | Stopped by Police | ACLU](#)

## **Communication before and during a picket**

**Buddy System<sup>17</sup>.** Have a plan for scenarios whereby participants may be separated from the group. Consider sharing GPS locations with group participants using location apps. Plan how and where to meet when separated, especially when using cell phones as the sole means of communication. Keep family and friends not involved in the picket informed of the location. The picket can be extremely stressful to participants and potentially cause depression, anxiety, and/or high levels of irritation in workers. Always be aware of what is happening and keep each other accountable.

**Help Words.** Using help words can help with communicating clearly. These help words include phrases such as “Tell me more”, “Help me understand”, “Thank you for sharing”, “I like what you said about...”, “I am interested in hearing your perspectives”, and “Please share your thoughts or concerns” and “What can I do to help you feel comfortable”. The use of help words acts as a tool that enables clarity of the safety and health concerns present. It allows participants to ask questions for a better understanding of the picket environment.

**Listen to the Picket Leader<sup>18</sup>.** Those with years of on-the-ground organizing experience can provide guidance on how to effectively picket. Follow their leads to determine when to start chants, march along specific routes, and for notifications of any concerns. Therefore, before going on picket, participants should know the designated picket captains for each site.

**Respect the Picket Line<sup>19</sup>.** Picket lines are established during pickets to communicate with others. Respecting the picket line is a component of a powerful striking process. As an act of solidarity, engage in the picket by listening to picket leaders and consuming picket information shared through pamphlets and other communication sources. Picketers must avoid engaging in any threatening or violent conduct at all times.

**Replacement Workers (Scabs).** In some cases, scabs may be hired by the employer to replace workers on the picket line. Hiring scabs is a deeply insulting move by an employer. There’s no way to sugarcoat the extreme

---

<sup>16</sup> First Amendment - [https://www.law.cornell.edu/constitution/first\\_amendment](https://www.law.cornell.edu/constitution/first_amendment)

<sup>17</sup> <https://secretary.yale.edu/student-life/staying-safe-and-healthy-public-demonstration-or-march>

<sup>18</sup> <https://www.nrdc.org/stories/how-picket-safely>

<sup>19</sup> [https://opseu.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/04/picket\\_document\\_2.pdf](https://opseu.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/04/picket_document_2.pdf)



# Picket Line Safety Guidance Document

insult and anger that striking workers will feel if scabs take their jobs and weaken their job actions. It is common for emotions to boil over and clashes to ensue between striking workers and scabs. Unions need to prepare carefully for such an occurrence and take measures to protect the mental and physical health of strikers and prevent any violence or serious clashes on the picket line. “Picketers must avoid engaging in any threatening or violent conduct at all times.”

**Security Personnel.** Employers will often hire private security personnel to watch over, take photos of, and/or video record a picket line (on the pretext of watching out for illegal activity). Security personnel will often spend their time patrolling the perimeter of the workplace property, sitting in a vehicle observing the picket, or being stationed inside the workplace periodically patrolling.

Picket Captains may want to introduce themselves to Security Personnel to establish a line of communication in the event of any incident. For the most part, Security Personnel will take a very “hands-off” approach and should not interfere with the picket line. Picketers should be coached to ignore Security Personnel, for the most part. In the unlikely event that Security Personnel seek to limit picket line activities or become threatening or intimidating in any way, the Picket Captain should be informed immediately and should relay the message to the union leadership/strike committee.

## Planning for the Picket Line

**Meet with Law Enforcement.** Involving law enforcement in the picket process creates awareness. Meet and notify law enforcement about the locations and days of the picket. When awareness is created, police services can respond to emergencies and keep the streets safe.

**Selection of Picketing Location and Routes.** The selected picketing location should be considered based on the hazard assessment. Identify locations that are visible, not dark alleys. Ensure the sidewalks are spacious enough to handle both the participants and the pedestrians. It must be done carefully to prevent interaction between motorists (passing vehicles) and participants. Know the entry and exit points for the sidewalks. **Before going on the picket, identify a location away from the area where the group can meet if there is a need to leave quickly.** Whenever participants feel unsafe in a crowd, they should stay calm and move into a safe place (i.e., the pre-arranged meet-up location). Spacing on the picket line can help to make the process safer.

**Access to Restroom, Cooling/Warming Stations, etc.** Leaders should make arrangements with nearby facilities to use their restrooms. Ask if their facilities can be used as warming or cooling centers by participants<sup>20</sup>. Participants should be informed of restrooms and/or portable toilets (e.g.: Porta Potty) locations. Leaders should determine the need for chairs and appropriate resting centers should participants feel tired and need to rest.

---

<sup>20</sup> <https://secretary.yale.edu/student-life/staying-safe-and-healthy-public-demonstration-or-march>



# Picket Line Safety Guidance Document

**Emergency Situations<sup>21</sup>.** Always have emergency contact and legal counsel contact numbers available. These numbers can be on a tag or through a means that is readily accessible by emergency personnel. The picket leader should also have the contact information of ambulance services ready. Thus, members may: (1) carry identification, a credit card and cash, transit passes, and a medical alert bracelet; (2) bring paper and a pen, and a list of contact numbers in case there is no cell phone access, or the network is overloaded; and (3) charge fully cell phones and bring along a spare battery and/or charger. If participants have any medical condition (e.g.: asthma, diabetes, etc.) they should carry medications, inhalers, blood sugar monitor, EpiPen, and other health supplies with them. Participants should have medical alert identification on them in case of an emergency. Mobility aids such as wheelchairs, canes, walkers, or baby strollers should be allowed, but check with the organizers and police to see if there are any restrictions, precautions, or alternate routes.

There should be designated AED/CPR-certified participants. If none were identified, picket leaders should identify participants who can<sup>22</sup>:

- Learn how to perform hands-only CPR and how to use an automated external defibrillator (AED)
- Learn how to perform seizure first aid to help a person with epilepsy until the seizure stops.
- Learn how to perform the Heimlich maneuver on themselves and others in a choking emergency.
- Learn how to use a portable generator safely to avoid electrocution and prevent carbon monoxide poisoning.

**Bring Appropriate Items and Keep Hydrated.** Dress appropriately for the season with warm clothes or sunscreen and bug spray. Participants' clothing should be comfortable, and shoes should be protective against slips and trip hazards. Bring sunglasses and hats to protect yourself from the sun. Bring energy snacks and a full-insulated water bottle - enough to last four to eight hours to keep hydrated. Always drink water before feeling thirsty. Thirst is a sign that the body lacks enough fluid, so it is best to drink water before feeling thirsty. The

CDC recommends drinking one (1) Liter of water every hour<sup>23</sup>. When dehydrated, injuries and illnesses such as heat exhaustion and heat stroke are more likely. Learn more about proper hydration here: [Heat Stress: Hydration \(cdc.gov\)](https://www.cdc.gov/heatstress/hydration).

Consider having a portable or handheld fan to alleviate the intensity of the heat. Always avoid bringing cannabis, alcohol, or any other drugs.

To avoid splinters, wrap the picket posters with a soft material while holding them. First aid availability should be sufficient for the number of picketers present. Coordinate first aid access with local authorities if needed. Participants should consider carrying a small first-aid kit that includes bandages and disinfectant wipes.

---

<sup>21</sup> <https://www.ohscanada.com/opinions/health-and-safety-on-the-picket-lines/>

<sup>22</sup> Prepare Your Health: Practical Skills - [https://www.cdc.gov/prepyourhealth/toolkits/00\\_documents/2019/18\\_295610-E\\_PIB\\_Practical-Skills.pdf](https://www.cdc.gov/prepyourhealth/toolkits/00_documents/2019/18_295610-E_PIB_Practical-Skills.pdf)

<sup>23</sup> <https://www.cdc.gov/niosh/mining/UserFiles/works/pdfs/2017-126.pdf>



# Picket Line Safety Guidance Document

## Know the Temperature and Establish a Work/Rest Schedule.

NIOSH has specific guidelines on work/rest schedules<sup>24</sup>. The schedule is based on air temperature when adjusted for direct sunlight and humidity. For example, if conducting light work (e.g.: walking on flat, level ground) and the temperature is 104 degrees Fahrenheit, NIOSH recommends that when participants reach 45 minutes of work, they take a 15-minute break. By taking a break, participants are reducing the impact that the extreme heat has on the body. More information on work/reschedule recommendations can be found here: <https://www.cdc.gov/niosh/mining/UserFiles/works/pdfs/2017-127.pdf>.

## Regulations and Guidelines to Consider While on the Picket Line

### Public Spaces:

Public spaces consist of sidewalks, streets, public squares, and parks<sup>25</sup>. For example, participants of the public generally have the right to picket on public sidewalks without a permit<sup>26</sup>. However, picketing must be done in an orderly and non-disruptive manner. There should be no blockage of building entrances and pedestrians should be allowed to pass by freely. Unions should always review local/state laws or ordinances regarding public demonstrations and consult with local counsel prior to initiating a picket. All participants should be aware of the best practices, and any state/city rules where applicable.

### Free Speech Activity<sup>27</sup>:

The First Amendment covers all forms of communication including music, theater, film, and dance. The Constitution also protects actions that symbolically express a viewpoint. Examples of these symbolic forms of speech include wearing masks and costumes. However, symbolic acts and civil disobedience that involve illegal conduct may be outside the realm of constitutional protections and can sometimes lead to arrest and conviction. Therefore, while sitting on a road may be expressing a political opinion, the act of blocking traffic may lead to criminal punishment. For more information on free speech read: [ACLU Know Your Rights](#).

**(The First Amendment guarantees freedoms concerning religion, expression, assembly, and the right to petition. It forbids Congress from promoting one religion over others and restricting an individual's religious practices. It guarantees freedom of expression by prohibiting Congress from restricting the press or the rights of individuals to speak freely. It also guarantees the right of citizens to assemble peaceably and to petition their government<sup>28</sup>.)**

While labor picketing is generally protected under the First Amendment, some restrictions may be placed on picketers. Always consult with local counsel prior to initiating a picket. <sup>29</sup>

---

<sup>24</sup> <https://www.cdc.gov/niosh/mining/UserFiles/works/pdfs/2017-127.pdf>

<sup>25</sup> Picket Laws by State - <https://www.findlaw.com/civilrights/enforcing-membersr-civil-rights/picket-laws-by-state.html>

<sup>26</sup> Know Your Rights: Demonstrations and Pickets - Microsoft Word - KYR pickets for web (aclu.org)

<sup>27</sup> Know Your Rights: Demonstrations and Pickets - Microsoft Word - KYR pickets for web (aclu.org)

<sup>28</sup> First Amendment - [https://www.law.cornell.edu/constitution/first\\_amendment](https://www.law.cornell.edu/constitution/first_amendment)

<sup>29</sup> Labor Union Protests and Marches | Constitution Annotated | Congress.gov | Library of Congress



# Picket Line Safety Guidance Document

## Drugs and Alcohol:

It is important to understand the drug and alcohol rules and policies of the state, city, and the Union during picketing. Under federal law, cannabis is classified as a Schedule I controlled substance under the Controlled Substances Act (CSA), 21 U.S.C 812(b)(1)(c)(2012). The law states that all Schedule I drugs are not accepted for medical use and have a high potential for abuse. However, there are states like California and Washington State that have legalized cannabis for medicinal and/or recreational uses. Aside from cannabis, other Schedule I drugs include: heroin, lysergic acid diethylamide (LSD), and ecstasy. methaqualone, and peyote<sup>30</sup>. When it comes to alcohol, know the open-container law of your city/state. The open-container law regulates or prohibits drinking in public by limiting the existence of open containers that contain or contain an alcoholic beverage in certain areas, as well as the active consumption of alcohol in those areas.

## Emergency Response and First Aid

### Basic First Aid.

- Always call 911 first in a life-threatening emergency.
- Keep a first aid kit checklist.
- Get medical attention for all injuries. Participants should be provided with specific contacts for medical emergencies. Participants should also alert leaders to their emergency contacts and what to do if they experience a medical emergency.
- Leaders should identify AED/CPR-certified participants. There should be a clear understanding of the nearest health center to the picket location, and where and how to contact the fire department (if needed).
- Always control bleeding with pressure. Always practice universal precautions by wearing gloves if blood is present.
- Treat physical shock quickly by elevating the person's feet about 12 inches unless head, neck, or back injury is suspected or if you suspect broken hip or leg bones. **DO NOT RAISE the person's head.** Turn the person on their side if they are vomiting or bleeding from the mouth.
- Move the injured person only when necessary.
- Perform the Heimlich maneuver<sup>31</sup> on choking victims. First ask, "Are you choking? Can you speak?" DO NOT perform first aid if the person is coughing forcefully and can speak. A strong cough can dislodge the object. Encourage the person to keep coughing to dislodge the object.
- Flush burns immediately with water.
- Respond appropriately to the form of poisoning.
- Report all injuries to the Union Safety and Health Committee.

---

<sup>30</sup> U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration - <https://www.dea.gov/drug-information/drug-scheduling>

<sup>31</sup> National Library of Medicine Medline Plus: Choking - <https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/000049.htm>



# Picket Line Safety Guidance Document

To learn more about First Aid see [NASD - Basic First Aid: Script \(nasdonline.org\)](https://nasdonline.org).

**For more information, contact the Teamster Training and Grants Department at (202) 624-6963 and visit <https://teamstersafety.org>**