



## **Savannah Area Film Office**

### **About**

Welcome to the Savannah area! Thank you for choosing to film your production in Savannah and the beautiful surrounding area.

The Savannah area boasts a wealth of locations including the nation's largest historic district, an evergreen urban forest and unique and timeless coastal and rural settings. Being the first planned city in the U.S., Savannah has retained its original layout with 22 public squares, quaint brick streets, and an architectural timeline which dates back to 1733. A wealth of period locations easily double as 19th century U.S. or European cities, our marshes and swamps have played as Southeast Asia, and our picturesque beaches are some of the few easily accessible shorelines on the Georgia coast.

The Savannah Area Film Office, a certified Film Commission, is the central point of contact for entertainment production in our region. We promote the Savannah area as a premiere film destination for motion picture, television, and commercial productions. Our office functions as a liaison between film companies and various municipalities in the Savannah area. We provide location assistance and coordination with local crew and support services.

The Savannah Area Film Office is a division of the Savannah Economic Development Authority (SEDA). In addition to the state of Georgia's tax incentives, the Savannah Area Film Office offers a local entertainment production rebate available for qualified productions.

## **Guidelines**

These guidelines are just that - guidelines, which may be relaxed or tightened as situations warrant. Our decisions reflect an attempt to balance the needs of filmmakers with those of businesses, residents, and the public interest, and to arrive at solutions that are favorable to all.

The Film Office has certain expectations regarding the presence of productions in our neighborhoods. Productions should remember that they are guests whose continued presence in these neighborhoods relies on the goodwill of the affected residents and businesses, and should act accordingly.

## **Registration**

All productions must register with the Savannah Area Film Office by submitting the Project Registration Form. This information is required a minimum of five working days before any filming activity is to take place.

## **Permit Requirements**

The Savannah Area Film Office does not issue permits. The Film Office is happy to assist in connecting productions with each issuing municipality. Permits are required for any production activity which will have an impact on public property within the Savannah area. Additional permits may be required from government agencies such as the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) or the Georgia Department of Transportation (GDOT).

A pre-production meeting is required between the Savannah Area Film Office, the appropriate municipality representative(s), and the production's Location Manager or another production representative. A listing of all anticipated locations with tentative dates should be reviewed as soon as possible, as the Film Office may know of possible conflicts with each municipality's services, local events and festivals, or other filming activities. Additional meetings may be required with the local police departments, traffic engineering, or other governmental departments.

Early application is recommended and may be required, as all permits are issued on a first-come, first-served basis, and the logistical complexity of the project may affect time needed for approval.

## **Permit Requirements (cont'd)**

- **The City of Savannah**
  - requires a minimum of 5 business days prior to filming to secure a permit.
- **The City of Tybee Island**
  - requires any production taking place from 1-5 days and requesting parking (maximum 25 spaces) to submit a permit application at least 5 days prior to filming.
  - requires that any production taking place from 1-5 days which will have activity on the beach and/or within the State's Shore Protection Jurisdictional Area shall complete and submit this application in its entirety at least twenty (20) business days prior to beginning of activity for consideration by the City Manager.
  - requires any production taking place for 6 or more business days or requiring traffic control or beach closures, to submit an application at least 28 business days prior to a City Council meeting and must be approved by the Mayor and City Council. NOTE: Monthly city council meetings typically take place the second and fourth Thursday of the month.
- **The City of Garden City**
  - requires all productions to submit a permit application at least 10 days before filming. In addition, all fees, deposits, and certificates of insurance must be secured 10 days prior to filming.
- **Unincorporated Chatham County**
  - Information coming soon!

***The Production Company shall limit the activities at each location to those outlined in the permit, within the time frame specified in the permit. Failure of the Production Company to comply with the guidelines and conditions set forth for each permit, or the use of any location not specified in the permit, shall give the authorizing party grounds to revoke the permit or take other restrictive actions as necessary.***

## **Safety**

The Savannah Area Film Office expects all productions to abide by industry standard safety guidelines. If known activities present a material public safety concern, the Savannah Area Film Office may cause production to pause until such issue(s) has been resolved.

## **Insurance**

Most municipalities require a certificate of insurance prior to securing a permit. Please refer to each municipality for specific insurance requirements.

## **Notification of Affected Businesses and Residents**

The production company is responsible for notifying all businesses and residents affected by the filming activity. Notification shall take place following the permitting municipalities' review of the application and no less than two business days prior to the planned activity. In some situations, more advance notification may be required. Earlier notification, including sign-off sheets, may be required in places where planned activities may have a significant impact on the normal activities of the area. The area to be notified will vary depending on the impact of the proposed activity.

Notification shall include a letter from the production company, and should include information concerning the location and duration of the filming activity, as well as specifics regarding lights, noise, traffic, and parking, where applicable, and contact numbers for both the production company and the Film Office. If permitting plans change after notification an updated notification letter must be distributed.

***Permits may be denied or revoked where insufficient time has been allowed for proper notification, or when the notification process has been improperly applied.***

## **Traffic Control and Street Closures**

Traffic control, if needed, must be handled by off-duty police officers hired by the production company through each municipality. Each municipality retains the right to determine the number of officers needed. Intermittent holding of traffic shall not exceed five-minute intervals, unless otherwise specified by the issued permit.

No holding of traffic is permitted during morning and/or evening "rush" hours on streets which experience congestion during these times, or on streets affected by school traffic during their opening and closing hours. Each case will be evaluated individually by the permitting authority. In general, "rush" times are defined as follows:

**Morning:                7:00 am – 9:00 am**  
**Evening:                4:00 pm – 6:00 pm**

## **Traffic Control and Street Closures (cont'd)**

Interruption of traffic on State maintained streets requires additional approval from the Georgia Department of Transportation (GDOT).

Requests for street closures or diverting of traffic should be made well in advance to allow for planning of alternate routes and proper signage. Production companies who wish to detour traffic within the Savannah area must submit a written plan along with the permit request to the permitting municipality and is subject to approval by the police department, traffic engineering division, and GDOT (if necessary). Production may be halted and streets opened in the event of an emergency. All traffic control, parking and street closures must allow for a working fire lane at all times.

## **Parking**

All equipment or support vehicles not in immediate use shall be parked so as not to cause any interference to pedestrian or vehicular traffic, and shall utilize no more than 50% of on-street parking on blocks where it is necessary and customary for residents to depend on on-street parking, unless otherwise permitted. Production vehicles must be parked in such a way as to not impede safe lines of vision at intersections, and in accordance with all ordinances regarding on-street parking. Any deviations must be approved by the governing municipality.

Production vehicles must not block fire hydrants, driveways, crosswalks, or other access ramps unless authorized by the permit and/or the private property owner where relevant. Emergency lanes must be open at all times.

Parking meters are located throughout the Savannah area and require payment unless otherwise permitted.

## **Additional Guidelines**

- No film activity, which involves the use of explosives, pyrotechnics, fire, smoke making machines or other special effects of this kind, may be undertaken unless specifically permitted and is subject to approval by the appointed Fire Marshall.
- Removal or alteration of vegetation (trees, flowers, grass, moss, etc.) in the public right of way or on publicly owned land is prohibited unless specifically approved by permit. Consultation with arborists, park and tree departments, and/or the Department of Natural Resources may be required prior to filming.

### **Additional Guidelines (cont'd)**

- Unless specifically allowed in the permit, production companies may not block the entrance to any business without permission of the owner; use private property without permission of the owner; drive any type of vehicle into a park or square; disturb or climb on any gravestones, statues, fountains, or monuments; work in any roadway; park illegally; block sidewalks; place equipment on sidewalks; or park large production vehicles in front of a business without permission of the owner. All sidewalks must remain open and ADA compliant unless specifically noted in the permit.
- Lighting for filming, both during the day and at night, should be oriented away from neighboring residences wherever possible, and should not interfere with the safe movement of traffic.
- Base Camps and equipment trucks moving into residential areas shall not do so before 6:00 am or after 11:00 pm without prior approval from the permitting municipality. No activity that will cause excessive noise is permitted without prior approval. Production companies are responsible for vacating locations used with a minimum amount of noise and disruption at the end of each shooting day.
- Production companies must allow for access of service vehicles, such as deliveries, mail, trash pickup, etc. or make alternative arrangements with the service provider and affected businesses or residents.
- Production companies are responsible for returning any public rights of way or city/county property used for filming, base camp, or equipment purposes to their original condition in a timely manner, and for repairing any damage.
- Use of prop weapons in view of, or audible to, the public requires the presence of one or more uniformed law enforcement officers. Additional notification to surrounding residences and businesses may be required for the use of prop weapons using blanks or quarter rounds.
- Municipalities reserve the right to restrict high impact filming in streets, neighborhoods, parks, or districts which have experienced undue stress from seasonal festivals and events, heavy filming, natural disasters, etc. The Savannah Area Film office and issuing permitting office will notify location managers and production companies if and when such restrictions are necessary.

### **Additional Guidelines (cont'd)**

- All animal waste must be neutralized and removed.
- In the event of natural or civil disasters, municipalities reserve the right to cancel all outstanding film permits on both public and private property within the affected area. Should evacuation of a street, neighborhood, or district be deemed necessary by fire, police, or other emergency authorities, all outstanding permits for that area are null and void. Permits will be re-granted as soon as possible after the State of Emergency proclamation has been lifted, following a safety evaluation conducted by the municipality, production company, and utility company representatives.

***The Savannah Area Film Office reserves the right to change, modify, update, or waive provisions of these guidelines where necessary for the public's safety and convenience. Each permitting authority reserves the right to cancel filming permits and/or take further restrictive actions where necessary to assure adherence to these guidelines.***

### **Festivals/Events**

Due to the high volume of visitors to the city during major festivals and events, additional permitting restrictions are in place, and there is limited accessibility in the City of Savannah and surrounding municipalities during these events. Please check with the Savannah Area Film Office for specific details. Currently there are a few major events which greatly impact the area.

#### **The City of Savannah**

- **MLK Day Parade – January**
- **St. Patrick's Day Celebration – March 17 (additional days before and after, varying by year.)**
- **Rock 'n' Roll Marathon – 1st weekend in November**

#### **Tybee Island**

- **Pirate Festival – early October**
- **Orange Crush – April**
- **Spring Break – various weeks between March – May**
- **Beach Bum Parade – May**

## **Fees**

Some municipalities charge fees for permits. There are costs associated with the use of certain municipal services or facilities. All authorized services provided by each municipality (such as sign removal) will be billed at an overtime rate and will be paid by the production company, unless otherwise stated. All fees are subject to change. Please refer to each municipality for specific costs.

If there are any questions regarding these guidelines, please contact the Savannah Area Film Office at (912) 447-4159 or refer to our website:  
[www.FilmSavannah.org](http://www.FilmSavannah.org)