Media Foundation for West Africa

Model Safety of Journalists Policy



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MODEL SAFETY OF JOURNALISTS POLICY

Strengthening the Rule of Law and the Fight Against Corruption in Ghana

Media Foundation for West Africa · 2026

ABOUT THIS POLICY

The Model Safety of Journalists Policy gives media organisations in Ghana practical, systematic procedures for protecting journalists and media workers before, during and after assignments. It covers newsroom security, assignment risk assessment, high-risk reporting, digital and legal safety, the safety of female journalists and journalists with disabilities, psychological well-being, safety equipment, incident reporting, monitoring, and the responsibilities of key institutions and stakeholders.

It was produced under the Action "Strengthening the Rule of Law and the Fight Against Corruption in Ghana", part of the Participation, Accountability, and Integrity for a Resilient Democracy (PAIReD) initiative.

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ABOUT THE MEDIA FOUNDATION FOR WEST AFRICA

The Media Foundation for West Africa (MFWA) is a regional independent non-governmental organisation dedicated to promoting and defending freedom of expression, media development and democratic governance in West Africa. Established in 1997 and headquartered in Accra, Ghana, the MFWA pursues its mandate through monitoring, research, advocacy and capacity building, supported by a network of national partner organisations across all 16 countries of the region.

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Empowering Media and Voices for Public Good

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WHY JOURNALISTS SHOULD ADOPT AND USE THE SAFETY POLICY

Journalists face physical, digital, legal and psychological risks in the course of their work, particularly when covering elections, demonstrations and investigative stories. The Safety of Journalists' Policy provides practical guidance to help them manage these risks, protect their well-being and carry out their work safely and confidently. Adopting and using the policy offers the following benefits:

01 Protect your life and well-being

The policy provides practical safety measures to help journalists minimise exposure to physical harm, psychological distress, digital attacks and other occupational risks.

02 Know your rights and entitlements

The policy helps journalists understand the safety resources, protection and institutional support they should expect from their media organisations, including assistance when they face threats, attacks or emergencies.

03 Undertake high-risk assignments with greater confidence

The policy provides guidance on assessing risks, taking appropriate precautions and preparing for potentially dangerous assignments, enabling journalists to pursue important stories without unnecessarily compromising their safety.

04 Know what to do when danger arises

It establishes procedures for responding to threats, attacks, emergencies and other safety incidents. This reduces uncertainty and enables journalists to make informed decisions when confronted with danger.

05 Access support when incidents occur

The policy clarifies procedures for reporting incidents and accessing appropriate institutional assistance, including medical care, psychosocial support, legal assistance and other available interventions.

06 Protect your digital security

It provides guidance on safeguarding personal information, communication devices, sensitive data and confidential sources against surveillance, hacking, harassment and other digital threats.

07 Speak up about safety concerns

The policy encourages journalists to report threats, unsafe working conditions and other risks without fear of victimisation. It reinforces the principle that raising safety concerns is a professional responsibility, not a sign of weakness.

08 Promote shared responsibility for safety

Adopting the policy helps establish clear responsibilities for journalists, editors, media managers and media owners, ensuring that journalists are not left to manage occupational risks entirely on their own.

09 Promote a safe environment for journalistic practice

By reducing preventable risks and promoting safer working conditions, the policy helps journalists continue undertaking public-interest reporting and fulfilling their watchdog role.

HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE

Who should use this guide?

- Media owners and publishers
- Newsroom managers and leaders
- News editors and assignment editors
- Journalists and correspondents including freelancers
- Other media practitioners such as video editors, camera operators, photojournalists, etc.
- Human resource managers of media organisations
- Security personnel

When to use this guide?

This guide is designed to be used across the entire news production process. This includes routine newsroom activities and periods where attacks happen. Use this guide to:

BEFORE ASSIGNMENTS

- Monitor evolving risks and threats
- Assess the extent to which a news story requires editorial and managerial approval
- Identify the most appropriate safety resource to use
- Plan communication and emergency mechanisms
- Brief field teams on threats and actions to be taken

DURING ASSIGNMENTS

- Make informed decisions on whether to continue or withdraw from assignments
- Engage the most appropriate steps to take during emergencies
- Protect media practitioners from further harm
- Protect confidential material and documents

AFTER ASSIGNMENTS

- Report safety incidents and attacks
- Assess equipment and safety resources
- Seek legal and psychosocial support
- Conduct newsroom safety debriefings

HOW TO GET JOURNALISTS' BUY-IN FOR IMPLEMENTATION

For the safety guide to work, journalists must understand, support and participate in its implementation.

SEVEN STEPS	Making the policy work in your newsroom	
01	Involve the journalists	Reporters, editors, media owners and field staff should be involved when adopting and implementing the policy.
02	Create safety heroes	Identify a safety focal person or respected staff member to promote awareness and encourage reporting.
03	Provide practical training	Conduct regular training and simulated exercises on risk assessment, emergency response, digital safety and incident reporting.
04	Encourage incident reporting	Create safe channels for reporting threats, hazards and near misses without fear of retaliation.
05	Provide resources	Demonstrate management commitment through equipment, training, insurance and welfare support.
06	Build safety culture	Make safety a routine part of newsroom planning rather than something considered only after an incident.
07	Feedback	Periodically review safety procedures with journalists after incidents and high-risk assignments.

IMPORTANT ISSUES AND WHERE TO FIND THEM

Use this quick finder to go straight to the issue you need. Each entry links to the relevant section.

01 Security in the newsroom ..... p. 7
02 Disaster and emergency preparation ..... p. 8
03 Assignment risk assessment ..... p. 10
04 Ensuring safety in red zones ..... p. 13
05 Digital and social media safety ..... p. 16
06 Legal safety ..... p. 19
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1.0 INTRODUCTION

A free, independent, and safe media landscape is the bedrock of every democracy. When allowed to operate freely within the right ethical framework, the media act as crucial tools for transparency and accountability. Globally, journalists play important roles in keeping the public informed, exposing wrongdoing in society and facilitating participation. These responsibilities often expose journalists to varying degrees of physical violence, threats, intimidation, online attacks, legal harassment and psychological stress.

Current scientific studies illustrate that journalist safety in Ghana is affronted by political polarisation and election-related abuse, illegal mining, chieftaincy disputes and organised crime. Despite the many safety threats journalists face, many media organisations in the country still rely on informal safety practices rather than structured safety systems and approaches. Advanced media systems have implemented diverse safety strategies, and developed out of scientific studies to enhance journalists' safety. Considering this, it has become essential that media organisations adopt strategic and holistic measures that improve the safety of journalists. This directly affects the quality of journalism and has significant ramifications for the broader relevance of journalism in Ghana's democracy.

This guide provides practical, systematic approaches and procedures that media organisations in Ghana can adopt to enhance the protection of journalists while maintaining ethical and professional standards. The policy extends directly from empirical insights into the forms of attacks journalists face, threat zones and beats, journalists' perceptions of safety conditions in the country and institutional dynamics and support that are operational in the current climate of journalists' safety in Ghana. This safety guide leans on global standards on journalists' safety, human rights frameworks, the prevention-protection-prosecution approach of the United Nations, national legal frameworks as well as organisational policies. These core issues foreground this safety guide document, translating larger legal and human rights models into practical everyday newsroom practices.

Purpose of this guide

The main purpose of this newsroom safety guide is to provide a practical, functional and context-specific guide for the prevention, mitigation and response to different forms of attacks and risks that journalists and media workers in Ghana face. The guide translates broader principles of journalist safety into observable activities that media organisations can integrate into everyday newsroom activities and editorial decisions.

This guide is based on a national study of the climate of journalists' safety in Ghana and draws on empirical findings to propose a structured system of activities that media organisations can use to enhance journalists' safety. Additionally, it takes inspiration from global best standards and practices such as those illustrated in BBC, CNN, and Reuters' safety policies. Essentially, this guide provides practical procedures that media organisations can engage in to improve proactive newsroom measures, strengthen institutional resilience and promote a culture of safety in newsrooms.

The safety guide is intended to achieve the following objectives:

1. To provide practical operational and functional guidelines for identifying, analysing, navigating and responding to the current threats and abuses journalists face before, during and after assignments.
2. To promote a culture of safety among media organisations to encourage the media to integrate safety issues as key aspects of routine journalistic work.
3. To enhance institutional responsibility and outline the roles of key media industry actors such as editors, media owners, managers, security personnel and journalists
4. To provide systematic guides for reporting and responding to issues of attacks on journalists.
5. To provide a robust framework that offers a succinct approach to reporting on high-risk assignments such as elections, political events, red-flagged social events and investigative journalistic work.
6. To enhance digital resilience by promoting safe digital practices, reporting structures and responsible use of technologies.
7. To promote overall holistic journalist well-being that encompasses psychosocial, emotional, digital and physical support for journalists.

1.1 Scope and Definitions

1.1.1 Persons covered

This guide has been developed in line with strategic empirical findings on journalist safety in Ghana. Essentially, the framework applies to the following groups of persons in Ghana within the media environment:

AT A GLANCE Persons covered by this guide

01	02	03	04
Professional journalists working in print media, digital and broadcast organisations	Freelance and independent reporters	Media operations workers, including camera operators, editors, producers and other field employees	Citizen journalists and media contributors

This guidebook also recognises that the modern media landscape is an increasingly evolving one which extends beyond regular traditional newsroom environments and systems. The framework therefore covers persons working in digital journalism organisations and other emerging media actors.

1.1.2 Forms of attacks addressed in this guide

In Ghana, journalists and media workers are exposed to varying forms of attacks and harassment. These range from physical attacks and threats to digital surveillance and cyberbullying. The guide addresses all forms of attacks against journalists in Ghana, including the following:

AT A GLANCE Forms of attacks addressed in this guide

01 Arbitrary arrests and detention of media workers	**02** Confiscation and destruction of media equipment	**03** Physical violence and assault
04 Verbal abuse	**05** Threats and intimidation	**06** Legal intimidation
07 Gender-based harassment	**08** Psychological intimidation and coercion	**09** Digital and online abuse, including cyber harassment, hacks, surveillance and coordinated online attacks, mis/disinformation and smear campaigns

1.2 Principles of the Newsroom Safety Guide

This guide is underpinned by the following key principles. They guide all newsroom safety decisions and activities.

01

Safety First, Story Next

The first principle upon which this policy framework is built proposes that journalists must consider their safety first. By prioritising the safety of journalists, this framework establishes a professional culture that upholds human life and well-being of employees over the pursuit of news and information.

02

Zero Tolerance for Attacks on Journalists and Media Workers

The second guiding principle this guide adopts is a zero-tolerance approach to attacks, harassment and violence against journalists. The principle argues that any attack on a journalist is not only a violation of individual human rights, but also a threat to democracy and the public's right to information.

The principle expresses that regardless of the form it may take, violence against journalists must be condemned, as it undermines the journalists' ability to perform their professional duties and establishes a media environment dominated by fear and disinterest in critical reporting.

03

Editorial Independence and Non-Discrimination

The third principle this framework operates on is that journalists' safety must be guaranteed regardless of their political associations, editorial stance, or media organisation's ownership structure. This principle speaks directly against threats, risks and attacks against journalists because of their personal affiliations.

This principle must also be well established in newsrooms. Media organisations must enact a culture of impartiality when providing protection for journalists. Thus, all forms of partiality that may inhibit the provision of protection for journalists must be discouraged in the newsroom. The principle re-enacts the broader sense of freedom of the press as a benefit to the entire nation rather than being the bona fide benefit of a few interest groups.

04

Prevention, not Reaction

The fourth principle is that safety issues must be treated with a proactive mentality and not from a reactionary perspective. Hence, all critical parties who use this guide must address threats and abuses against journalists, focusing on prevention rather than responding to attacks after they have happened. Thus, while this guide provides key strategies for addressing and responding to attacks and threats, it emphasises that prevention and proactivity provide effective perspectives for addressing attacks on journalists.

05

Continuous Learning

Threats and abuses against journalists are not static entities. They evolve over time and affect diverse aspects of journalistic quality. In essence, newsrooms must continuously explore and understand the evolving dynamics of threats to journalists. They must review strategies, threats and lessons from previous incidents, policies and issues to provide current and effective prevention and response strategies.

1.3 Building a Culture of Safety in Newsrooms

Evidence from research suggests that newsrooms in Ghana lack a sense of safety culture. This stems directly from the fact that most newsrooms in Ghana rely on informal safety practices instead of structured institutional systems. In essence, newsrooms' safety activities are often built on isolated practices of safety instead of a composite structure of integrated activities informed by an organisational view of safety concerns. To address this, it is essential that newsrooms adopt an organisational culture that is sensitive to the safety needs of journalists. Developing an authentic and effective safety culture requires an intentional move away from ad hoc and isolated decision-making to structured institutional practices.

A safe newsroom does not exist in the presence of a written safety policy only. It emerges from an organisational culture in which journalist safety is seen as a key professional value that influences overall journalistic activities. News safety culture is a holistic element that emerges from commitments from management members through to editors and senior journalists. The newsroom safety culture is characterised by the following:



The core of building effective safety cultures in newsrooms is resident in the performance of critical duties by key institutional stakeholders in media organisations. Essentially, effective safety cultures are built on a sense of shared responsibilities among media owners, managers, editors, journalists and other key staff members such as security personnel. While all stakeholders in the media organisations are essential and play key roles, editors and assignment editors are central figures in implementing safety cultures in newsrooms. Newsroom safety cultures must be integrated into overall editorial decision-making. In this regard, the assignment editor or newsroom editor must consider the following issues:

- The foreseeable risks associated with the news assignment
- The necessity of the story considering risks associated with it
- Other alternative approaches to covering the stories that are less risky
- The preparedness of the covering team to address challenges and risks
- The availability of communication systems and risk mitigation equipment

- The availability of emergency arrangements such as escape routes, control mechanisms and personal defence strategies.
- The availability and effectiveness of open reporting systems that allow journalists to report all forms of threats and abuses against them

2.0 NEWSROOM SECURITY

The safety of journalists encompasses diverse issues. These often go beyond field reporting to include security in the newsrooms. The business of journalism concerns sensitive investigations and interactions with politically and socially sensitive issues. In essence, newsrooms often become targets of attacks and threats.

In Ghana, while many media organisations have basic security measures such as the presence of security personnel and logbooks for visitors, these mechanisms are usually not adequate. Furthermore, many newsrooms in Ghana are situated in shared commercial buildings. This exposes journalists to diverse risks. Holistic journalists' safety structures must focus on newsroom security.

2.1 Physical Safety Measures

To ensure optimum security for journalists in newsrooms, media organisations must ensure the following:

- Controlled entry and exits for staff members and visitors. Standardised organisation-specific visitor identification systems and resources such as identity tags (ID tags).
- Standardised visitor logbooks
- A clear designation of restricted access areas for editorial and production activities
- Installation of high-quality surveillance mechanisms such as closed-circuit television (CCTV) cameras
- Installation of high-level security locks for offices, studios, archives and records as well as equipment rooms
- Clearly marked exit points and fire emergency assembly points
- Where feasible, the installation of fire and smoke detection systems
- Periodic professional inspection of newsrooms to identify security challenges
- Systems for immediate reporting of suspicious persons and activities, and a well-structured response mechanism

2.2 Digital Security in the Newsroom

Modern newsrooms in Ghana are highly reliant on the use of digital technologies to develop, prepare, write, and share news stories. Holistic safety in the newsroom must integrate digital safety practices. For media organisations to provide complete digital safety for journalists, they must:

- Maintain secure wireless network connections
- Ensure that software, antivirus and operating systems are updated regularly
- Ensure the use of multi-factor user authentication for accounts

- Provide encrypted and secure digital storage platforms
- Provide digital platforms for backup storage
- Implement systems for periodic digital surveillance and inspection of all digital and electronic tools
- Implement and enhance periodic training for journalists and staff members on digital safety matters, including phishing attacks, identity theft, virus attacks and secure management of digital assets.

2.3 Disaster and Emergency Preparedness

Newsrooms must develop and maintain a written and communicated emergency and disaster response plan which covers disaster and attack situations such as:

AT A GLANCE Emergencies the response plan must cover

01 Fires	**02** Armed attack	**03** Intrusions into the newsroom
04 Threats of bombings	**05** Health and medical emergencies	**06** Digital attacks such as hacking and viral attacks

In dealing with disasters, attacks and emergency situations, media organisations should:

- Document an emergency response plan which must integrate:
  - Evacuation routes and procedures
  - Assembly points
  - Emergency contacts
  - Safety resources and equipment
  - Communication mechanisms
  - Personnel responsibilities
- Publicise quick response procedures at vantage points of the premises
- Perform periodic emergency drills to ensure staff are familiar with response procedures and mechanisms
- Develop and use an emergency response checklist

2.4 Security Personnel

Security personnel must operate on a proactive basis rather than as threat response units. Media organisations must ensure that qualified security personnel are employed and utilised. It is also essential that security personnel receive training specific to media security and journalists' safety to improve their capacities for protecting newsrooms

and journalists. Additionally, they must ensure that the following roles are performed effectively by security personnel:

- Control and monitor access to newsroom locations
- Identify and report suspicious behaviours and individuals
- Act as first responders to all forms of emergencies
- Implement emergency evacuation support
- Provide protection for journalists in instances where the newsroom is under attack
- Coordinate with police personnel and emergency units

3.0 ASSIGNMENT RISK ASSESSMENT

This guide highlights the essence of proactive and preventive measures in dealing with risks journalists face. Journalists often work in risky environments and are surrounded by threats. Before approving any assignment or beat for journalists, assignment editors and media managers must conduct a structured risk assessment and provide reports to journalists, security personnel and media owners.

The news editor or team leader for the assignment must ask the following questions in line with ensuring effective assessment of risks in the assignment. A checklist answering these key questions provides a holistic comprehension of the extent of risk involved in undertaking the assignment. This can inform the forms of strategic activities to engage in, and the forms of safety equipment that must be prepared and used. The table below presents a list of key questions and issues to consider as part of risk assessment for the assignment.

Table 1: *Assignment editors' risk assessment guide*

Characteristics of the story	Location	Key actors	Capacity of the covering team
1. Does the story have political implications and is it politically sensitive? 2. Does the assignment involve allegations of corruption? 3. Does the assignment involve organised crime? 4. Does the story concern illegal mining (galamsey) and other forms of environmental degradation issues? 5. What are the economic interests involved in the story? 6. To what extent can the story affect certain political, social and economic elites in the country?	1. What is the history of crime and attacks in the location? 2. How easy is it to access hospitals in the area? 3. What is the quality of communication network coverage? 4. How available are the police, and what is the nature of police response at the location?	1. What groups (organised or unorganised) are likely to oppose media presence and attack journalists? *Consider key actors such as:* • Political party fanatics • Traditional authorities • Protesters • Illegal miners (galamseyers) • Land guards and associates of traditional leaders	*Consider:* 1. Experience of the covering team 2. The availability of security and communication equipment and systems 3. Emergency evacuation plans 4. Reporting channels 5. Response mechanisms

DECISION RULE

Assignment editors must postpone the assignment if the responses to the key issues are mostly negative. A largely negative response means that the covering team or the media organisation is not equipped to reasonably manage risks associated with the assignment. Hence, the assignment must be postponed or dropped if possible.

DECISION FLOW **From risk assessment to deployment**

01 Assess the assignment

Answer the key questions on the story, the location, the key actors and the capacity of the covering team (Table 1).

↓

02 Are the responses mostly negative?

YES → Postpone or drop

The covering team or the organisation is not equipped to reasonably manage the risks.

NO → Complete the checklist

Work through the editor's decision checklist (Table 2) and submit it to the media manager.

03 Brief, equip and deploy

Brief the team, issue safety equipment, confirm communication systems and emergency contacts, then deploy.

Sample editors' decision checklist

The assignment editor can engage the use of the risk assessment checklist provided below. This can be adapted to fit newsroom dynamics and the nuances of the story. The checklist must be made available to the manager of the media organisation, who must supervise all risk assessment procedures and associated safety issues.

Table 2: *Assignment editors' risk assessment checklist*

Checklist item	Yes	No
01 A risk assessment has been done and completed duly	☐	☐
02 A risk assessment report has been submitted to the media manager	☐	☐
03 Designated journalists have been briefed	☐	☐
04 Safety equipment and personal protection equipment are made available	☐	☐
05 Effective communication and contact systems and equipment are available and functional	☐	☐

Checklist item	Yes	No
06 Emergency contacts have been identified and briefed	☐	☐
07 All legal issues have been considered	☐	☐
08 A contingency and execution plan has been designed	☐	☐
09 The expected public impact of the story rationalises the risk	☐	☐

4.0 HIGH-RISK REPORTING (RED ZONES)

Empirical insights suggest that several reporting areas have become high-risk zones for journalists. These red zones present journalists and media workers with the most forms of entrenched risks and threats. Hence, reporting in such zones requires enhanced planning and strategic navigation. Key reporting areas such as political reporting, investigative and crime reporting, coverage of chieftaincy and land issues, election coverage, and coverage of illegal mining areas are core risky zones that media organisations must pay attention to. The following issues must be considered.

AT A GLANCE **Red-zone beats covered in Table 3**

01 Political Reporting	**02** Investigative journalism	**03** Illegal Mining Reporting (Galamsey)
04 Chieftaincy, land and ethnic disputes	**05** Crime reporting	**06** Court reporting and trials
07 Corruption Reporting and Coverage of Public Accountability Issues	**08** Covering Natural Disasters and Emergencies	**09** Reporting Online

Table 3: *Risky reporting areas and actions to be taken to ensure safety*

Risk area / assignment	Common hazards and risks	Required actions / control
Political Reporting ***Elections, political campaigns/political protests***	Political violence, physical and verbal abuse by party supporters, crowd crushes and stampedes, possible police brutalities, equipment seizures and damage	• Engage in thorough pre-deployment risk assessment • Journalists must work in pairs and teams • On-field journalists must maintain constant communication with the newsroom • Conduct a quick sweep of the location and identify emergency exit points • Maintain distance from crowded areas • Wear easily identifiable press identification tags or uniforms • In the event that there is an escalation of issues beyond what was prepared for,

Risk area / assignment	Common hazards and risks	Required actions / control
		withdraw from the scene immediately.
Investigative journalism	Legal threats, equipment seizure and destruction, attacks by organised crime groups, threats from powerful individuals and interest groups, surveillance, intimidation, family intimidation	• Conduct confidential editorial planning • Utilise secure communication channels • Speak to the legal team to understand legal dynamics • Strategise to ensure safety of sources • Work in teams • Establish enhanced emergency contact systems • Utilise secure digital and traditional storage systems
Illegal Mining Reporting (Galamsey)	Physical and verbal abuse from miners and financiers, armed groups, equipment seizure and destruction, environmental hazards	• Conduct thorough risk assessment • Gather local intelligence before fieldwork • Avoid field coverage without adequate planning • Visit mining sites with protective equipment and gear • Maintain constant communication with team lead or editors • Identify and utilise local guides • Avoid confrontations with miners and armed groups • Withdraw from coverage site immediately when heated confrontations emerge
Chieftaincy, land and ethnic disputes	Attacks and hostilities from community members, ethnic tensions, crowd violence, misinterpretation of journalistic intent	• Engage community leaders before and during coverage • Ensure cultural sensitivity • Maintain a neutral and objective stance. Do not align with any group visibly • Contact and work with journalists who are familiar with the situation at the location • Withdraw from coverage sites when tensions escalate.
Crime reporting	Post-Traumatic Stress Disorders (PTSD) from exposure to violent crime scenes, attacks by criminal groups, interference from police and security operations	• Contact and work with police officials • Respect police protocols and crime scene boundaries • Avoid reporting in high-risk locations alone • Be situationally aware of violent conduct and attacks
Court reporting and trials	Intimidation and threats from litigating parties, legal threats, public	• Ensure strict observance of court reporting regulations • Do not engage in direct confrontations with

Risk area / assignment	Common hazards and risks	Required actions / control
	disorder and retaliation	parties if not necessary, maintain professionalism and neutrality • Report threats to editors • Keep journalistic materials such as notes, recordings and documents safe
Corruption Reporting and Coverage of Public Accountability Issues	Legal threats, that is strategic lawsuits against public participation (SLAPPs), intimidation, surveillance, cyberattacks, smear and reputational attacks	• Ensure extensive fact-checking before publication • Engage legal teams • Enhance digital security • Engage psychologists to navigate psychological stress
Covering Natural Disasters and Emergencies	Fires, floods, collapsing structures, exposure to diseases, psycho-emotional stress	• Coordinate with emergency service personnel • Utilise appropriate safety equipment and protocols • Consider conducting risk assessment • Do not enter risky structures • Prioritise personal safety • Maintain frequent contact with the newsroom
Reporting Online	Cyberattacks and harassment, hacking, mis/disinformation and smear campaigns, identity theft, phishing attacks, viruses	• Consider the use of strong passwords and codes and frequently change them • Ensure the use of multi-factor authentication • Do not share sensitive information on unsecure platforms • Report online abuse • Do not engage with links, emails and software registration that you do not trust.

5.0 DIGITAL AND SOCIAL MEDIA SAFETY

Journalists and media organisations must treat digital issues as critical aspects of newsroom and journalists' safety. Journalists must understand that ensuring information security in the digital age, responsible online behaviour and professional use of digital assets are key elements of overall journalist safety. Enhancing digital, online and social media safety directly affects journalists' safety climate. It safeguards confidential information while protecting the journalist's sources as well. Organisations and journalists must pay attention to the following in enhancing safe use of digital and social media tools.

AT A GLANCE **Five areas of digital and social media safety**

01	02	03	04	05
Social media use	Online abuse	Protecting confidential information	Use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) tools	Device Security

Table 4: *Digital and social media risk issues and safety actions to be engaged*

Digital safety category	Action
Social media use	**Journalists using social media must:** • Adhere strictly to professional standards while using social media tools • Ensure a clear distinction between verified information and individual opinion • Ensure that information posted is verified information only • Do not share, like or repost information you are not sure about • Do not engage in heated and abusive online confrontations **Media organisations must:** • Develop and implement in-house social media guidelines that cover both official accounts and the personal accounts of media staff, especially journalists • Provide frequent training on social media professionalism, ethical use and threats • Where feasible, implement schemes for monitoring social media engagements of both official accounts and personal platforms of journalists • Provide in-house reporting and response strategies
Online abuse	When journalists or media organisations are faced with online attacks and abuse; **Journalists must:**

Digital safety category	Action
	• Endeavour not to leave online and digital footprints when working on sensitive reports. The journalist must disable location access and limit or avoid posting personal contents that can reveal their locations and other essential details • Avoid any forms of retaliation • Desist from engaging in heated confrontations with abusers • Strive for evidence of abuse • Engage institutional reporting procedures and systems • Seek expert help where necessary **Media organisations must:** • Provide internal systems to help journalists document records of attacks and abuse • Provide in-house reporting and response strategies • Inform appropriate authorities and coordinate towards response and possible prosecution • Provide psychological support and legal aid to journalists
Protecting confidential information	**Journalists must:** • Ensure all confidential documents are encrypted and password protected • Not use unsecure information sharing tools to share confidential documents • Strive to always protect online sources • Store interviews, documents and materials in secure password protected digital platforms • Journalists must not make phone calls where confidential issues may be discussed in open places such as in public transport **Media organisations must:** • Implement internal policies on digital information sharing • Provide the necessary tools and training for enhancing information security
Use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) tools	Publicly available AI tools retain uploaded information and make them available to other users. Journalists must **not** upload any of the following in AI systems and tools: • Identities of sources • Unpublished materials • Embargoed stories • Confidential government or organisational materials Media organisations must also ensure that where some AI systems are approved for newsroom use, they are used professionally and in line with documented organisational policies on AI use.
Device Security	**Journalists should:** • Lock all devices (official and personal) with strong passwords and biometric systems where available • Frequently update computer operating systems

Digital safety category	Action
	• Access and install strong malware protection systems and tools • Not access and use public WiFi networks when handling confidential information • Report all lost or stolen computers and electronic devices to management • Media organisations should • Aid journalists in accessing strong anti-virus tools • Develop procedures for remotely disabling organisational devices where incidents of theft or loss are reported by journalists

6.0 LEGAL SAFETY AND PREPAREDNESS

Journalists in Ghana are often exposed to diverse forms of legal threats and harassment. These include SLAPPs which often express themselves as intimidation, delay and discouragement from completing journalistic pieces. These issues have direct bearings on independent journalism and freedom of the press. Media organisations and journalists must therefore enforce strategies to prepare for, prevent and mitigate these complex legal issues. The matrix below indicates some of the common legal risks and situations journalists may encounter, activities they must engage to prevent them and how to mitigate such situations effectively.

Table 5: *Legal safety issues, preventive and responsive actions*

Legal risk	Implications / consequences	Preventive action	Responsive action
Libel and Defamation Claims	Civil lawsuits, financial and reputational damages	• Ensure that you verify all facts before publication • Use multiple verification techniques and sources • Keep document evidence • If the story is a major one, conduct editorial and legal reviews before publication	• Inform the newsroom editor of the legal situation • Maintain and keep all evidence to the story • Speak to the legal counsel or aide • Do not delete any document (published or unpublished)
SLAPPs	Financial and legal intimidation, delay in story publication; self-censorship	• Conduct holistic legal review • Keep all documents • Ensure that there is a strong public interest justification for the story • Do not cover the story alone, involve an experienced colleague or editor	Report incident and seek organisational legal support. Where this is unavailable, seek legal aid from stakeholder associations (Ghana Journalists Association (GJA), Ghana Independent Broadcasters Association (GIBA), Private Newspapers and Online News Publishers Association of Ghana (PRINPAG), National Media Commission (NMC), etc.)
Arrests and police interrogation	Restrictions on freedom and personal liberties; truncation of story coverage; equipment seizure	• Always keep a valid press ID with you • Maintain communication with the newsroom • Understand legal rights and strive to exercise them	• Remain calm and identify yourself as a pressman • Request representation from a qualified legal practitioner • Inform the editor and media manager of the arrest
Equipment Seizure	Source confidentiality breach; loss of	• Ensure that all devices are encrypted	• Inform the editor and manager of the seizure

Legal risk	Implications / consequences	Preventive action	Responsive action
	evidence to stories	• Ensure regular backup on safe secondary and external devices • Do not store confidential information on portable devices	• Seek internal legal aid • Keep records of all items that have been seized. Request their return when legal redress is over
Legal and Court Summons	Extended court proceedings; delay in story publication	• Ensure legal review of sensitive news stories • Keep records of processes you engaged in covering the story	• Speak to internal legal department and share all necessary documentation • Comply with court and legal procedures
Revelation of Confidential Sources	Compromise of the safety of news sources	• Always ensure complete protection of the identities of sources • Use only secure communication tools and methods • Ensure that identifying information and tags are removed from reporting	• Engage internal legal department where available • Ensure strict adherence to organisational policies on source protection
Risk of Contempt of Court	Financial charges and fines; imprisonment	Understand and adhere to court reporting regulations	• Suspend the publication of the story and seek legal advice • Correct publication errors immediately
Complaints on Privacy and Data Protection	National regulatory sanctions; legal and court actions	• Ensure that you obtain the necessary consent before publication • Understand and comply with privacy laws and regulations	• Keep and maintain records of consent • Inform news editor and manager of the complaint towards seeking legal aid
Copyright and Intellectual Property Claims	Financial damages; loss of content	• Ensure that you obtain the necessary consent before publication • Ensure that all sources are well attributed • Use only licensed material	• Ensure that all content that infringe on copyright laws are duly removed • Ensure documenting ownership of authentic content under the right laws • Seek legal and professional aid
Cyber and online attacks and risks	Psycho-emotional distress; culmination into potential physical attacks; smear campaigns;	• Enforce privacy settings • Do not disclose personal information • Record all forms of abusive content directed at you	• Keep evidence of abusive content • Follow organisational procedures for reporting cyberattacks and online

Legal risk	Implications / consequences	Preventive action	Responsive action
	intimidation		abuse • Engage law enforcement where necessary

Editors must ensure that legal requirements are met before sensitive news stories are published. News editors and managers must confirm that:

LEGAL CHECKS	Before a sensitive story is published	
01	Facts verified	All facts have been verified and cross-checked through multiple mechanisms
02	Evidence in hand	There is evidence backing the sensitive news story
03	Right of reply	All individuals implicated in the news story have been provided with adequate opportunities to respond
04	Legal review	All legal implications and issues have been reviewed with either an in-house legal team or an outsourced department
05	Team prepared	Journalists leading the story understand and can engage organisational procedures for responding to legal issues and claims.

7.0 SAFETY FOR FEMALE JOURNALISTS AND JOURNALISTS WITH DISABILITIES

Female journalists have become key players in Ghana's media landscape. Essentially, they have become important figures in Ghana's democracy, playing key roles in accountability, public discourse and inclusivity. However, they often face key safety threats that differ from those faced by their male counterparts. These threats and risks differ in frequency, intensity, implications and nature. In Ghana, many female journalists tend to withdraw from some stories because of threats such as gender-based violence, intimidation, online stalking and abuse, sexual harassment and other forms of gender-based harassment.

Media organisations in Ghana, therefore, have a duty to implement gender-based responsive safety mechanisms that are designed specifically to protect female journalists. These mechanisms and measures must, however, not be used as platforms to deny female journalists right to cover important stories. They must provide a platform to encourage female journalists to play more active roles in the performance of journalistic duties.

While encouraging female participation in journalism is critical to enhancing inclusivity, media organisations must also play critical roles in ensuring the safety of journalists with disabilities. Newsrooms must operate in cultures where disabilities are not observed as barriers to journalism. Instead, the diverse needs of such journalists must be considered in safety planning, while adequate resources are provided to enable them to work effectively and comfortably with limited exposure to occupational risks and hazards.

7.1 Gender-based Sexual Harassment

7.1.1 Gendered threats and risks

Female journalists in Ghana may encounter risks including the following:

AT A GLANCE **Gendered threats and risks**

01 Undesired physical contacts and sexual harassment	**02** Gender-based verbal abuse and verbal intimidation	**03** Online harassment and stalking
04 Smear attacks and publication of personal information	**05** Discrimination	**06** Harassment in the newsroom by male colleagues

7.1.2 Assignment planning for female journalists

Before deploying female journalists on risky assignments, editors must:

- Conduct gender-sensitive risk assessments
- Discuss assignment-specific concerns with the journalist
- Establish effective communication mechanisms
- Integrate female journalists into teams they are comfortable working with to ensure limited issues of in-house harassment
- Confirm emergency contacts and internal reporting procedures
- Confirm safety equipment and resources

7.1.3 Preventing sexual harassment and violence

Media organisations should implement and maintain a zero-tolerance approach to sexual harassment, especially against women. Issues of sexual harassment must be treated as breaches of professional behaviour. It must therefore be treated with utmost seriousness and absolute disdain, whether it involves perpetrators within the media organisation or those on field assignments.

The following mechanisms must be present in newsrooms to aid the prevention of sexual harassment and violence internally and externally:

- A written anti-sexual harassment policy
- A confidential harassment reporting scheme specifically for reporting and responding to sexual harassment and violence. This must also factor in platforms for preserving online evidence of abuse when such incidents occur online
- A policy statement integrated into overall organisational policies on approaches to seeking psychological support after journalists have suffered sexual harassment or attempted sexual violence during routine journalistic work

- Procedures for prompt investigations and disciplinary measures for perpetrators
- Periodic cyberstalking training to aid identification of possible perpetrators online and threatening situations

7.2 Journalists with Disabilities

Protecting journalists with special needs must be a key part of organisational and newsroom cultures in Ghana. Consistent with the Persons with Disability Act, 2006 (Act 715) and the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD), media organisations must implement inclusive safety measures that protect the rights, freedoms and professional participation of journalists with disabilities. To enforce a comprehensive policy for journalists with disabilities, consider the following issues:

Before deployment

Before deployment, assignment editors and newsroom managers must:

- Conduct a holistic, individualised risk assessment sensitive to the journalist's specific needs
- Discuss reasonable accommodation arrangements
- Arrange accessible and comfortable transportation, and discuss other travel plans
- Provide aides where necessary, and assess accessibility of reporting locations
- Provide emergency response mechanisms and resources
- Ensure that other staff members understand the peculiarities of working with journalists with disabilities before drafting them into field teams.
- Provide communication tools that are easily accessible and useful to journalists with disabilities
- Provide and ensure that all assistive tools and resources are functional

Newsroom facilities

- Maintain accessible and disability friendly entrances, workrooms, exits and assembly points
- Implement and enforce a zero-tolerance policy to discrimination on grounds of disability in the newsroom
- Engage staff members in periodic disability awareness training
- Integrate disability-sensitive issues into overall organisational policies

Organisational support

In instances where journalists with disabilities experience safety issues, media organisations must provide:

- Effective mechanisms for reporting attacks, hazards and threats
- Immediate mechanisms for receiving medical assistance
- Legal support, especially as regards work-related events
- Counselling and psychosocial support
- Protection against discrimination and retaliation
- Reasonably conducive environments for recovery and recuperation

8.0 PSYCHOLOGICAL, MENTAL HEALTH AND TRAUMA

Journalists in Ghana are often faced with challenging situations that expose them to distressing situations. This often affects journalists' psychological and emotional well-being. Reporting on violent crimes, disasters, conflict and war zones, among other gruesome assignments, may lead to stress accumulation, anxiety and emotional exhaustion. When these issues are not addressed properly, they may degenerate into serious mental issues such as depression, secondary trauma, and post-traumatic stress symptoms. In this regard, media organisations must recognise the importance of media workers' psycho-emotional wellbeing and implement strategic steps to support it.

WHY IT MATTERS **How unaddressed stress can escalate**

01 **Stress accumulation** →

02 **Anxiety** →

03 **Emotional exhaustion** →

04 **Serious mental health issues**
Depression, secondary trauma and post-traumatic stress symptoms

Common triggers: reporting on violent crime, disasters, conflict and war zones, and other gruesome assignments.

Media organisations must

- Establish effective emotional and psychological stress reporting platforms and mechanisms
- Provide confidential counselling services for journalists dealing with work-related stress
- Provide well-structured post-assignment debriefings, especially for journalists and media workers who are frequently engaged in reporting on traumatic events
- Implement peer support programmes
- Design and implement periodic mental health training programmes

Journalists must

- Know themselves and their personal limits. Journalists must exercise personal boundaries regarding what traumatic events they expose themselves to
- Take breaks and leave after traumatic assignments
- Seek support from institutional systems and mechanisms provided by the media organisation
- Utilise organisational trauma reporting systems to report and document stress and psychological trauma

Media organisations must	Journalists must
• Enforce employee leave policies following high-profile and risky assignments	

9.0 SAFETY EQUIPMENT

Safety equipment is essential to journalists' safety. Media organisations and media owners have a duty to ensure safety equipment is available based on the nature of the assignment and the risks involved in completing it. The provision of safety equipment must be considered in line with key issues such as risk assessment, accessibility, procurement issues, proper maintenance strategies, and frequent training in their use.

Most media organisations in Ghana lack adequate and appropriate safety equipment. This implies that journalists do not have the needed equipment to protect themselves regardless of the numerous risks they face. Especially for high-risk assignments, safety equipment and personal protection tools are key. While journalists can engage in some strategies to enhance their safety, safety equipment provides the right mechanisms for realising this. Media organisations must provide physical protective gear, digital security tools and psycho-emotional strategies for emotional protection.

Recommended safety equipment and protective resources

Table 6: *Journalist safety equipment and use*

Protective equipment	Use	Reporting situation
Protective helmet	Protection against head injuries	Natural disasters, fires, protests, illegal mining sites
Protective eyewear	Provides protection for the eyes from debris, smoke and irritant substances	Natural disasters, fires, protests
Nose masks	Protection against smoke, dust, and other airborne hazards	Galamsey sites, fires, outbreak of diseases, reporting on pollution
First-aid kit	Immediate treatment of injuries	All assignments
Press ID cards	To easily identify journalists and provide access to evacuation routes	All assignments
Reflective press jackets	Improves identification and visibility	Campaigns, protests, elections reporting, night reporting, disaster reporting
Emergency communication tools (two-way radio)	Effective for backup communication in low-networked areas	Reporting in remote areas, disaster reporting, conflict zones
Location-sharing devices and GPS-enabled tools	Assist journalists' location tracking and emergency response	Reporting in remote areas, disaster reporting, conflict zones, investigative projects
Computer and device	Secure handling of digital	Investigative reporting, other high-

Protective equipment	Use	Reporting situation
security tools	documents and information	risk reporting forms
Fire extinguisher (for newsrooms and vehicles)	Quick response to fire situations	Newsrooms, field broadcast vehicles, OB Vans

NOTE

It is essential to note that the acquisition and use of this equipment alone may not be enough for complete holistic safety. Media organisations must ensure frequent review of the equipment. This is essential for maintenance reasons and to ensure that equipment reflects evolving risks and technological advancements.

9.1 Vehicle Safety

Media organisations must ensure that vehicles used for field assignments:

- Are mechanically roadworthy
- Are serviced regularly
- Are equipped with first-aid kits and medical supplies
- Have fully functional communication equipment
- Are fuelled adequately for on-field assignments
- Have been duly insured and licensed
- Have functional tracking systems

Beyond this, it is essential that drivers assigned to high-risk zones receive basic defensive, surveillance and manoeuvring driving training. Media managers must ensure that this training is organised frequently and drivers are engaged in drills to make them on-field ready for possible incidents of attacks.

9.2 Digital and Technological Tools

The provision of physical safety resources is essential. However, in the current technological dispensation, journalists must also be provided with adequate digital protection resources. Where feasible, media owners and managers must provide the following to improve online safety for journalists:

- Communication encryption resources
- Safe cloud storage platforms and backup systems
- Password management systems
- Virtual Private Network (VPN) services
- Anti-virus protection resources
- Encrypted secondary/external storage tools

9.3 Equipment Management and Storage

Protective equipment and resources must be managed as institutional assets rather than personal property of journalists. Hence, media managers must ensure that equipment is protected and maintained as much as other devices and assets in the organisation. Where feasible, a safety equipment officer must be employed to oversee safety equipment inventory, their deployment, maintenance and replacement.

AT A GLANCE The equipment management cycle

01	02	03	04	05
Register	**Store**	**Inspect**	**Maintain**	**Replace**
Keep an equipment inventory register	Secure, easily accessible locations	Before and after every use	As advised by manufacturers	Damaged or expired items

A safety officer or equipment team runs the cycle and keeps records of every inspection and replacement.

Media organisations must establish and communicate systems for:

- Maintaining an equipment inventory register
- Employing a safety officer or assigning safety equipment management teams
- Storing equipment in secure and easily accessible locations
- Replacing damaged equipment
- Inspecting safety equipment and resources before and after their use, both in the newsrooms and in the field
- Documenting schedules for equipment maintenance

Media organisations must also ensure that safety equipment and resources are not only available, but are maintained and replaced where necessary. Media organisations must:

- Develop periodic equipment inspection schemes
- Replace expired products in the first-aid kit
- Ensure that batteries in key devices (communication tools, trackers, etc.) are functional and replaced where necessary
- Adhere to equipment maintenance recommendations as advised by manufacturers
- Keep records of inspection and replacement schemes and activities.
- Ensure immediate withdrawal of safety tools and resources that do not meet the current safety standards

10.0 MECHANISMS FOR REPORTING ATTACKS, RISKS AND HAZARDS

10.1 What Should Be Reported?

Journalists and other staff members working in news media organisations must report the following issues immediately after they are observed:

AT A GLANCE **Report these immediately**

01 Physical violence and attempted assaults	**02** Threats	**03** Police interference	**04** Arrests and detention
05 Equipment seizure, theft, damage and destruction in newsrooms and on field	**06** Online harassment including cyberbullying, doxxing, stalking, smear campaigns, etc.	**07** Legal threats, SLAPPs and court actions	**08** Injuries recorded during assignments
09 Mental health issues such as fatigue, psychosocial stress, emotional distress, PTSD, etc.	**10** Security breaches in the newsroom and on digital devices	**11** Any forms of threats, hazards and risks that compromise the safety of journalists and other newsroom staff	

10.2 Procedure for Reporting Threats, Risks and Hazards

It is essential that all issues relating to attacks and risks to journalists are reported appropriately. All media organisations must establish a simple and confidential system for reporting safety risks to journalists. The flowchart below presents a five step approach that is recommended as a standard procedure for reporting threats and risks against journalists. The chart illustrates that journalists must report abuses against them immediately after they experience such incidents. This must be done in written documentation form for easy reference. It proffers what assignment editors must do when abuses are reported and procedures that must be followed to launch investigations into the incident.

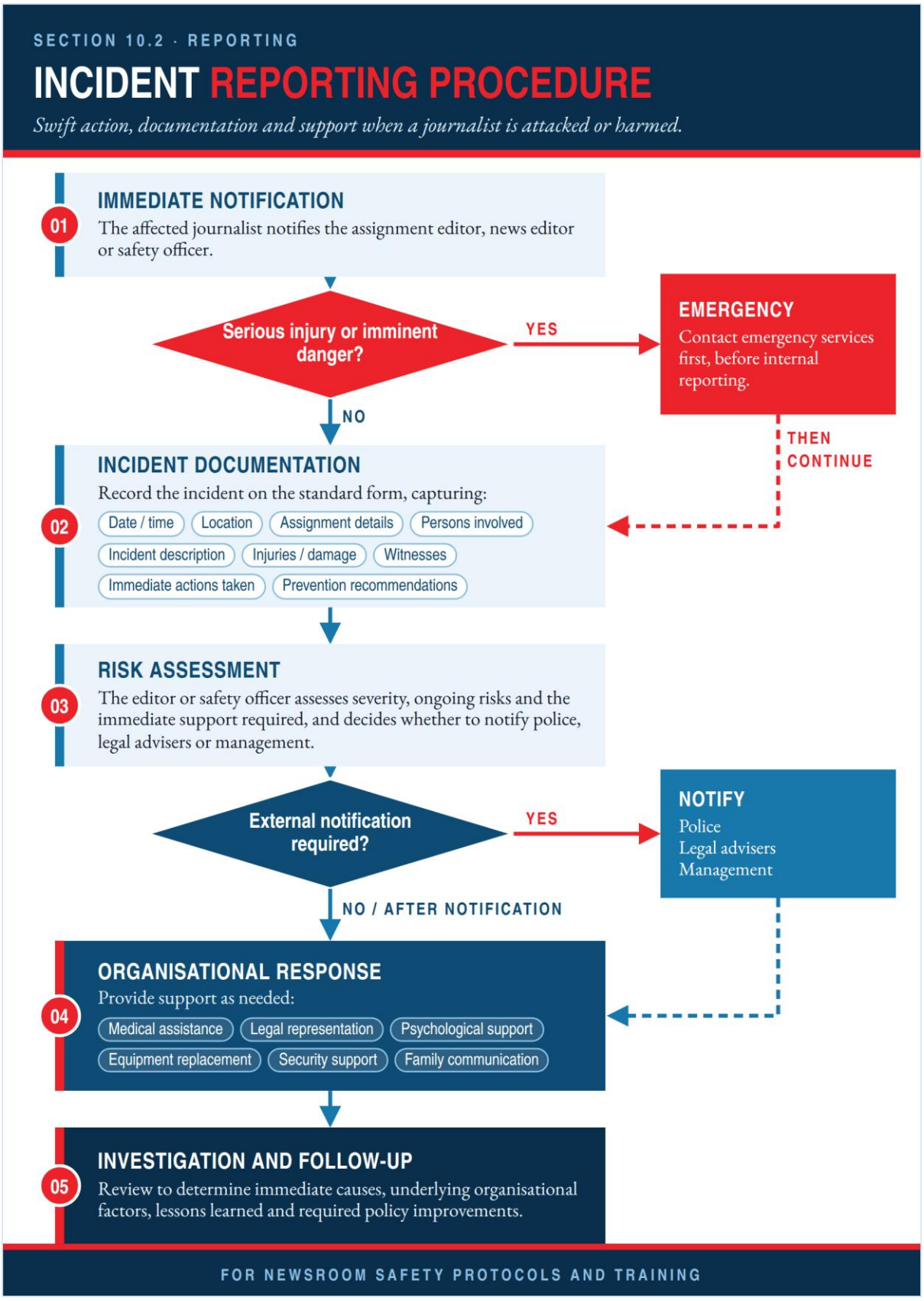


Figure 1: *Flowchart showing reporting procedures for journalists experiencing attacks*

11.0 MONITORING, COMPLIANCE AND REVIEW

The extent of effectiveness of this guide relies not only on its adoption but on its consistent implementation. To ensure effectiveness of the guide, monitoring and compliance schemes must be implemented in newsrooms. Monitoring and compliance systems enable media organisations to assess the application of safety mechanisms, identify weaknesses in safety systems and improve overall safety for journalists. It is therefore important that monitoring, compliance and review mechanisms are integrated into organisational cultures to ensure holistic application of safety measures and continuous improvement.

11.1 Organisational Responsibility

Management of media organisations must:

- Oversee the adoption, approve its application and support the implementation of the guide
- Provide adequate financial and human resources to aid the adoption and implementation of the guide
- Organise and oversee the review of safety performance
- Ensure that safety practices, resources and mechanisms are innovated based on corrective learning

Assignment and news editors must:

- Conduct assignment risk assessment
- Oversee and ensure compliance with the safety guide
- Monitor incident reporting and implement swift response mechanisms

Journalists and media workers must:

- Ensure that they comply with safety practices and procedures
- Report risks, threats, attacks and hazards immediately they occur or are perceived to occur.
- Provide adequate feedback and information for continuous learning and improvement of safety systems.

11.2 Safety Audits

To ensure that safety systems, resources and mechanisms remain relevant and effective, media organisations must conduct at least one safety audit annually. The newsroom safety audit must assess:

- The effectiveness of the implementation of this safety guide

- Physical security in the newsroom
- Digital security of journalists and in the newsroom
- Availability of safety equipment and resources
- Effectiveness of staff training
- Patterns and trends in hazards, risks and attacks
- Legal robustness and response to legal threats
- Psychosocial support systems
- Organisational support systems
- Continuous learning and safety improvement systems

These issues must form the core parts of the annual audit. A report on this audit must be developed and made available to all departments of the media organisation. Additionally, to ensure overall improvements in Ghana's safety climate, the annual audit report must be made available to national regulatory and association institutions such as the GJA, GIBA, NMC and the Ministry of Communication, Digital Technology and Innovations (MoCDTI). Insights in the report can be used to inform safety plans and actions for media organisations the following year.

The annual audit can also be used to monitor the safety performance of media organisations and to determine the extent to which the organisation may need external support from key industry stakeholders. The annual audit report must be developed in tandem with key performance indicators (KPIs). This approach offers a measurable system for determining how well media organisations are performing in safety issues.



The following KPIs must be considered:

1. A reduction in on-the-job-related safety incidents
2. Completion rate of assignment risk assessments
3. Frequency of training and percentage of staff trained within the year
4. Time used to respond to reported incidents

5. Number of unresolved safety complaints
6. Availability and functionality of safety resources
7. The extent to which insights from previous review have been implemented

KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

KPIs must be reviewed often to examine progress of the organisation.

12.0 RESPONSIBILITIES OF KEY INSTITUTIONS AND STAKEHOLDERS

12.1 Professional Journalists' Associations

Professional journalist associations serve as relevant advocates for the rights and well-being of journalists. In Ghana, the GJA is responsible for playing this leading role. Other key associations, such as GIBA and PRINPAG, also play critical roles in this regard. Their roles and responsibilities include the following:

i. They shall be responsible for documenting incidents involving attacks on journalists, advocating on behalf of victimised journalists and engaging in discourse to demand accountability for violations of the rights of journalists
ii. They shall be responsible for providing professional development avenues for journalists, such as training, workshops, and other critical initiatives that are targeted at enhancing ethical journalism in the country. These forms of professional development initiatives aid journalists in improving their knowledge and skills, which become relevant assets in mitigating complex risk environments.
iii. They shall be responsible for providing support and solidarity for affected journalists.
iv. Through activities such as advocacy, the GJA can create awareness of threats journalists face and mobilise national and global attention in instances when violations become too rampant and serious.
v. The GJA shall publish annual reports on journalist safety in Ghana
vi. These roles must be properly actualised and integrated with the roles and responsibilities of other actors.

STAKEHOLDER MAP **Who does what for journalists' safety**

12.1 Journalists' associations
GJA, GIBA, PRINPAG: document attacks, advocate, train, support affected journalists, publish annual safety reports.

12.2 Media regulators
NMC and NCA: require newsroom safety policies for licensing, monitor the sector, settle disputes, convene stakeholders, track attacks.

Shared responsibility
A safe environment for journalists depends on all four groups playing their part.

12.3 Law enforcement
Police, judiciary, Attorney-General: prompt and impartial investigation, swift adjudication, unobstructed coverage, police–media liaison.

12.4 Media owners and managers
Safety policy, risk assessment, internal protocols, legal and psychological support, social media guidelines.

12.2 Media Regulators

Within the scope of journalists' safety, media regulators play very important roles. The NMC as well as the National Communication Authority (NCA) are constitutionally mandated to safeguard the freedom and independence of the media while promoting responsible journalism. The roles of media regulators through the NMC shall include the following:

i. The NCA through the NMC shall request standardised newsroom safety policy documents as part of licensing requirements for media organisations
   a. The NMC and NCA shall ensure that newsroom safety policy documents meet standards expressed in this document
   b. The NCA and NMC shall not exercise arbitrary powers in issuing media operation licenses regarding this. Activities that are observed as abuse of powers in this regard shall be seen as risks and attacks on journalists' safety and can be contested in the law court by relevant stakeholders
ii. They must act as monitors on developments and issues within the media industry. They are responsible for settling disputes among some of the main stakeholders within the media sector regarding journalists' safety.
iii. The NMC shall convene and facilitate stakeholder engagements within the media ecosystem. Through consultations, public hearings, and lectures, the commission facilitates communication among some of the key stakeholders.
iv. The NMC must coordinate national-level efforts to address attacks and threats against journalists. They are also considered critical in providing mechanisms that track cases of violence and intimidation directed at media professionals.

12.3 Law Enforcement Institutions

Improving journalists' safety highly depends on the performance of law enforcement by the designated law enforcement agencies. These agencies are legally mandated to protect the basic rights of journalists while ensuring social order and observance of the law. The Ghana Police Service plays a central role in this regard, acting as the first point of call for journalists who have experienced some form of attack. Essentially, within the scope of journalists' safety, the Ghana Police Service and other law enforcement agencies must play pivotal roles. These include the following:

i. Law enforcement agencies must receive complaints of attacks and harassment for the conduct of professional investigations into such violations of human rights.
ii. The judiciary and the Attorney-General's office must ensure swift and impartial adjudication of cases involving attacks on journalists
iii. The police service and other relevant security agencies must ensure prompt and unbiased investigation of incidents involving attacks on journalists to prevent a climate of impunity while reinforcing public belief in the justice system.

iv. Security agencies must ensure that events such as protests, crime investigations, political rallies and emergencies that often cause clashes between journalists and security personnel are covered by the media without any forms of obstruction. Usually, these forms of events lead to interactions between the media and security personnel. These interactions sometimes instigate some conflicts. It is essential that security personnel understand the rights and relevance of journalists to mitigate such interactions when they arise.

v. It is also important to strengthen police-media relations. This can be done through the establishment and resourcing of liaison mechanisms that facilitate effective and strategic communication between the police service and journalists. This can be crucial in preventing conflicts that occur during field reporting while improving coordination between the police and journalists during high-risk assignments.

vi. Furthermore, law enforcement agencies must ensure the development of a specialised investigative desk for fast-tracking cases involving attacks on journalists. This may include the establishment of dedicated and specialised units and teams trained with knowledge of media security and equipped with the necessary resources. The specialised units must engage in documenting, investigating and fast-tracking the prosecution of cases involving attacks on journalists.

vii. Finally, specialised training programmes must be introduced to improve the capacity of police personnel in effectively interacting with journalists and providing security and protection for them, especially during high-risk events and assignments.

12.4 Media Owners and Managers

Owners and managers of media organisations have direct responsibility in ensuring the safety and protection of journalists they employ in their organisations. Journalist safety should be observed not only as a human rights or professional obligation issue. It also leans on strategic business dimensions, offering media organisations a competitive advantage. Unsafe media environments open media organisations to significant economic, legal, operational and reputational risks. Essentially, media owners and managers must play key roles in ensuring journalists' safety to actualise human rights and strategic benefits of such engagements. Their responsibilities must include the following:

i. Develop and submit newsroom safety policy documents to the NMC and NCA as part of the requirements for media operation licensing

ii. Conduct risk assessments before assigning journalists to cover high-risk assignments and beats, including protests, political campaigns and rallies or investigative assignments. News editors and newsroom managers must carefully evaluate the threats associated with risky assignments and ensure that journalists are well prepared.

iii. Ensure that they implement a well-structured internal safety protocol that guides media workers in responding to risks and threats in risky situations. These mechanisms may include emergency communication systems, safety check-in procedures, and guidelines for reporting violations against journalists.

iv. Provide professional legal and psychological support to journalists who encounter attacks. This is essential in ensuring that issues of physical threat and other forms of attack against journalists are addressed in a professional way.

v. Provide and enforce clear guidelines on:
   a. Social media use for staff and the entire organisation
   b. Online interaction procedures
   c. Online risks and reputation management
   d. Digital risk awareness
   e. Professional and ethical application of organisational guidelines to avoid restriction of freedom of expression of staff

vi. Integrate journalists' safety considerations into all aspects of organisational operations, including:
   a. Human resource policies
   b. Crisis and risks management procedures
   c. Business sustainability strategies
   d. Editorial planning processes

13.0 EMERGENCY CONTACTS

112

Life-threatening emergency?

Call 112 first for ambulance and disaster response, then notify your editor or safety officer.

Organisation	Telephone	Website
Ghana Journalists Association (GJA)	+233-256622583	www.gjaghana.org
Ghana Independent Broadcasters Association (GIBA)	0302251910	www.giba.gh.org
Media Foundation for West Africa (MFWA)	0302555327 0302955213	www.mfwa.org
Private Newspapers and Online News Publishers Association of Ghana (PRINPAG)	+233-244822034	www.prinpag.com
Ghana Police Service	—	www.police.gov.gh
Ghana National Fire Service	—	www.gnfs.gov.gh
National Disaster Management Organisation	112 0299 350 030 0299 350 244 0302 964 884	www.nadmo.gov.gh
Ghana National Ambulance Service	112	www.nas.gov.gh
Ministry of Communication, Digital Technology and Innovations	0302666465	www.moc.gov.gh
National Media Commission	+233-244456754	www.nmc.org.gh

USEFUL CHARTS AND GUIDE MAPS

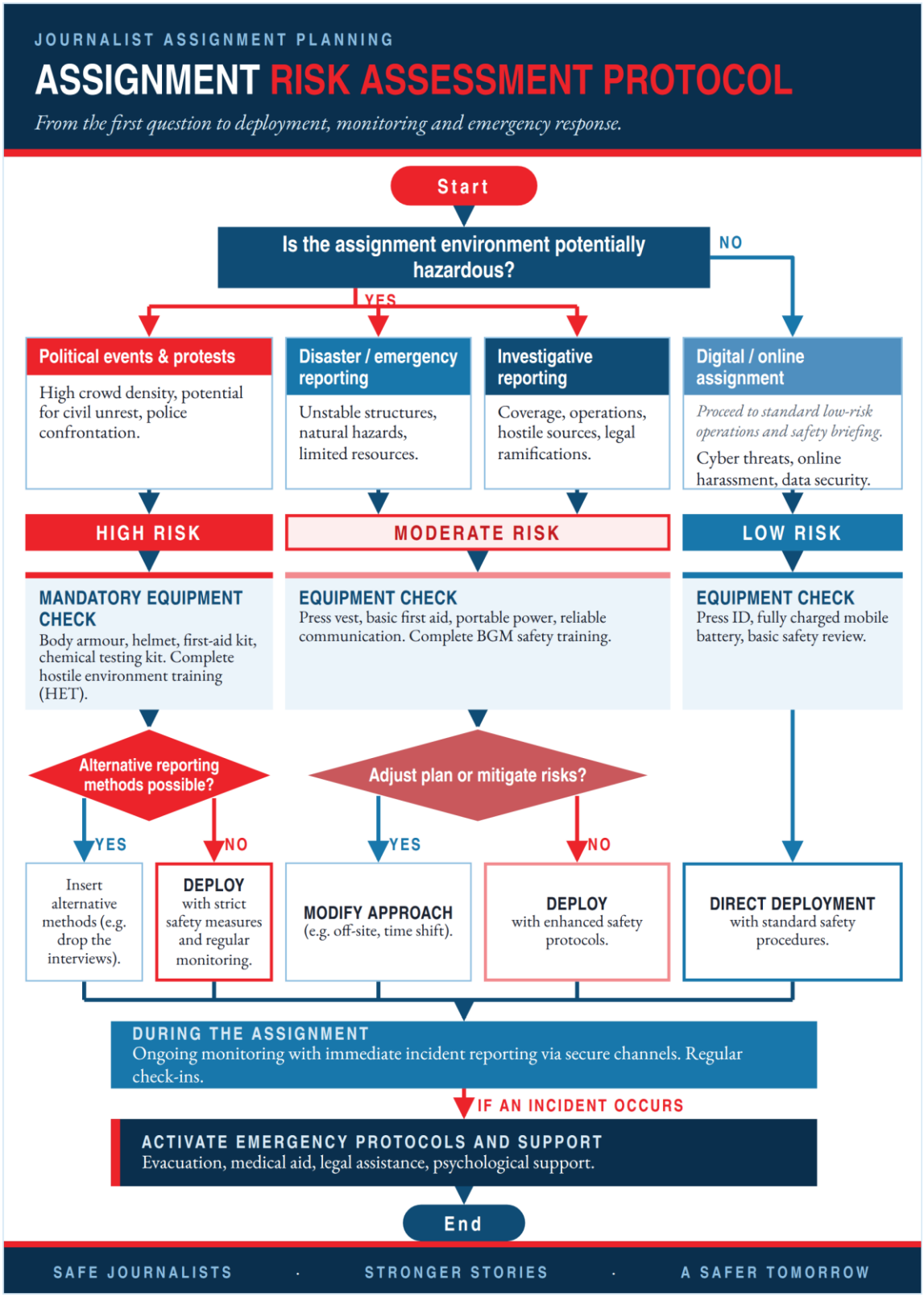


Figure 2: *Risk assessment protocol guide for assignment editors and journalists*



Figure 3: *Chart on what journalists must do during unplanned assignments or breaking news stories*



Figure 4: *Chart on how to ensure safety in newsrooms*

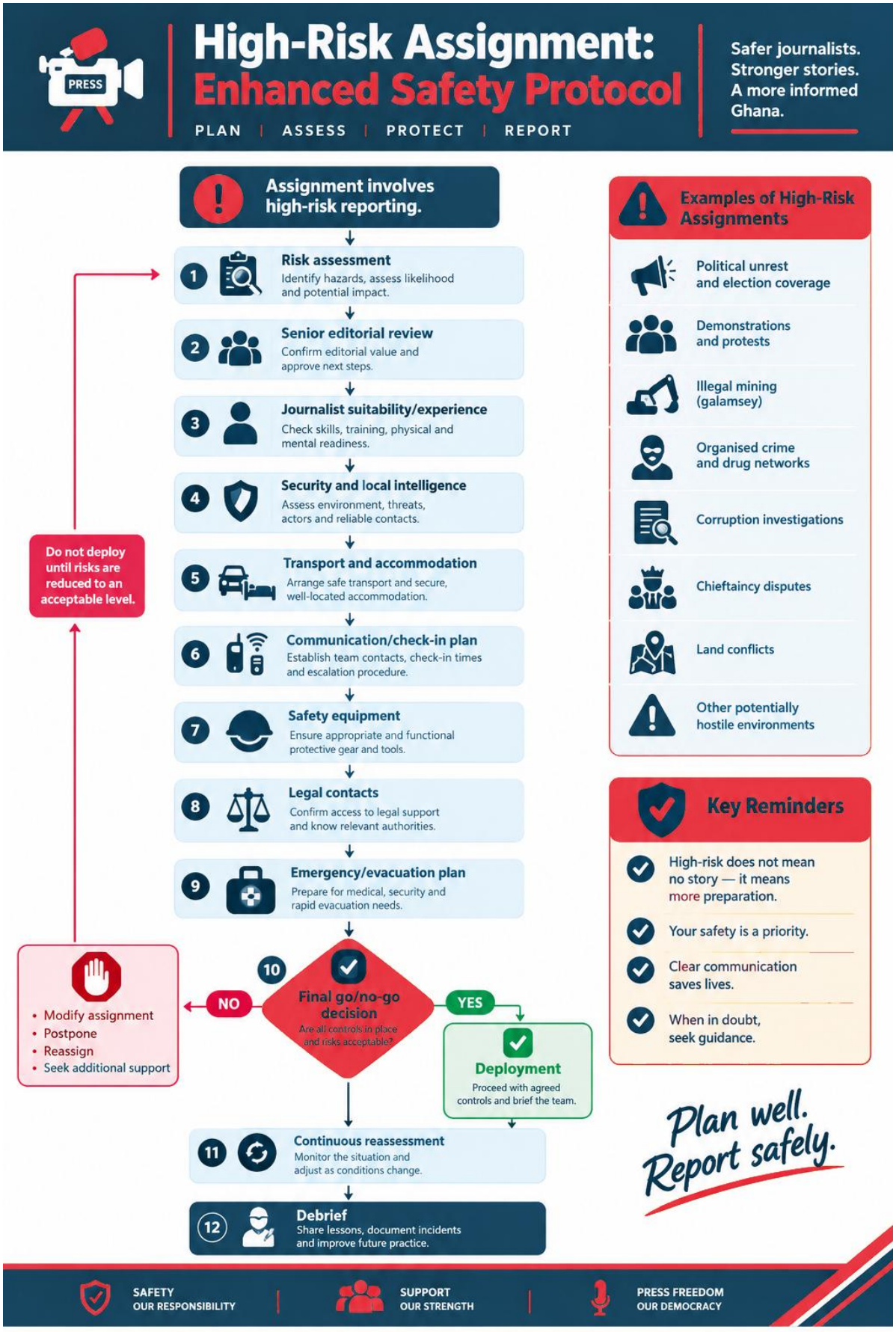


Figure 5: *Enhanced safety protocols for high-risk (red zone) assignments*

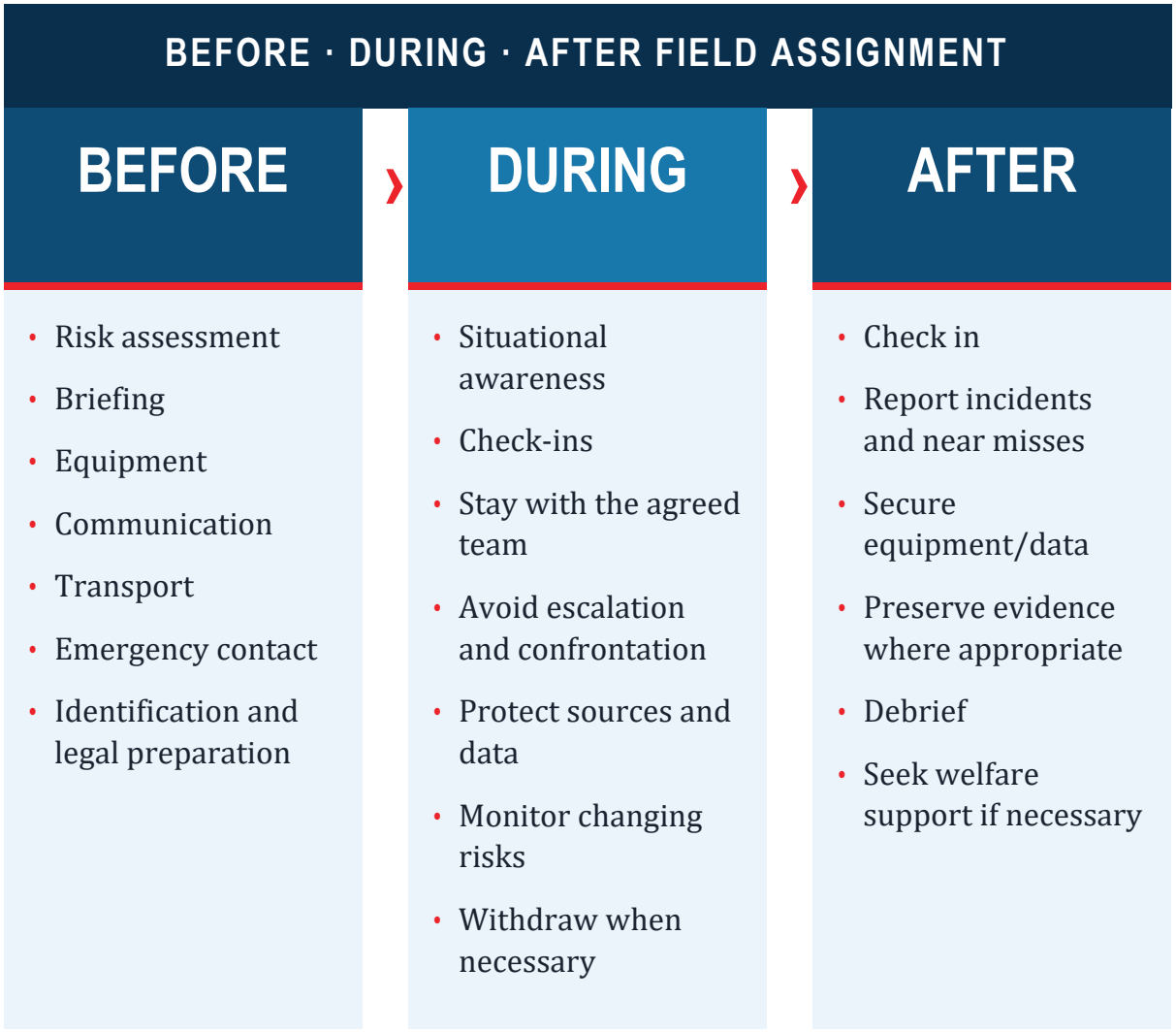


Figure 6: *What to do before, during and after field assignments*

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