



Philadelphia Neighborhoods: Safety Tips

Your safety takes priority over any story, assignment, or equipment.

Philadelphia is one of the most vibrant cities in America. The birthplace of our complicated and imperfect yet nonetheless important and enduring democracy, Philadelphia is a big city with big-city opportunities and challenges. As part of your training as a journalist, you'll be asked to report on many parts of the city, and you may encounter dangerous situations. Our department, our college, and Temple University care deeply about your safety. And you will need to do your part, too.

The following are some common-sense tips for staying safe as you move around the city. As we all know, certain neighborhoods have reputations for being safer than others, but you should remain vigilant and aware of your surroundings no matter where you are.

In the event of an emergency, please contact the Journalism Department Chair Logan Molyneaux at 801-319-0019.

Some tips for being safe in Philadelphia

1. If you are uncomfortable about a reporting assignment, discuss your concerns with your instructor.
2. Although we generally suggest that students write and produce solo-created stories, you should consider bringing a friend or a classmate with you to unfamiliar places. Journalists often travel in teams.

Making a plan, getting to know a neighborhood

One of the activities that causes students anxiety every semester is getting to know their neighborhood while developing the sources and resources necessary to produce good journalism. Students may also be nervous about heading into a neighborhood they may not know very well, and may be concerned about getting to know the lay of the land while also staying safe. The following tips will help you develop the relationships with sources you'll need to effectively report from your neighborhood, without taking unnecessary risks.



1. Start at common public gathering spaces: libraries, coffee shops, and community centers are all highly trafficked places where people gather, and where members of the community will feel safe and comfortable opening up to you.
2. Next, rely on public meetings and events to further develop relationships in the community. Most Registered Community Organizations (RCOs) host monthly membership meetings which attract some of the most involved members of the community.
3. Get to know people who are political or social leaders in the area, folks who are looking to make change. Oftentimes they are connected to many others and can provide you with many pathways in your reporting.
4. Plan to do the bulk of your reporting during business hours. Many people interact with the press as part of their job, though many more don't. Still, it is important to respect their time by asking them to serve as sources for your work during regular business hours (8 a.m.-5 p.m.) so that you are not cutting into their personal time. Scheduling your reporting this way means you will be contacting and visiting sources during times when there is likely regular foot traffic and the presence of people. It also allows you to travel to and from the neighborhood with a reasonably predictable schedule.
5. Don't forget about the telephone! Aside from direct observation, much of journalistic reporting comes from the words of other people. Use the phone to talk to people when you can't travel to interview them in person. You don't always have to be on the ground and in the neighborhood to successfully report out a story, though being present always helps.
6. And don't forget about City Hall. Philadelphia Neighborhoods, housed at TUCC (rooms 510 and 513), is right across the street from City Hall, where much of the city's business happens and gets debated publicly. Look for meetings that pertain to a dominant issue in your neighborhood, and reach out to neighborhood sources for comments that show how a particular policy or decision will affect the people on your beat.
7. Feel free to discuss any specific neighborhood reporting concerns with your faculty instructor. We can connect you with resources and help you develop plans.

In the field

1. Tell someone where you're going and what you'll be doing. Give them your cell phone number. If you are reporting alone, let someone else know your exact location and how long your interview will take. You should check in with your friend before and after your interview.
2. Make sure your phone is fully charged.
3. Know or carry a secondary set of contact numbers in case you are separated from your phone.
4. Take a credit card and enough money, but not too much.



5. Stick to well-lit and generally high trafficked areas when walking from one place to another.
6. Use all your senses to stay aware of your surroundings; avoid looking at or listening to your phone.
7. Walk with confidence.
8. Take common sense measures, hiding equipment and jewelry; one longtime reporter recommends carrying money outside of your wallet. For example, you might keep your money in the front pocket of your pants.
9. If you are being followed, change course and find a business or community center to enter.
10. Never accept a ride from a stranger.
11. Interviews should be conducted in public places.
12. Always dial 911 in the event of any kind of emergency.
13. Trust your instincts. If a situation does not feel right, leave.
14. Have a press pass, which identifies you as a member of the press, ready to show others, but don't wear it in a way that is readily visible to others and don't keep it in a wallet. Also carry a government ID, such as a driver's license.
15. Don't wear expensive jewelry or clothing or carry an expensive bag.
16. Get permission before entering private places.
17. Get permission before recording in private places, via phone, or when online.

Equipment

We also recommend that, when using cameras in the production of a story, travel with a partner. They can help you handle the gear and make you less attractive to a potential thief. Also, if driving, lock the camera gear in your trunk and keep it otherwise out of sight when you are not using it.

Vulnerable Student Populations

If you identify as a member of a vulnerable population group and feel that this puts you at a particular risk in reporting, please feel free to discuss your concerns with your instructor.