



Film industry urged to pause production as COVID-19 cases soar in SoCal

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Film industry urged to pause production as COVID-19 cases soar in SoCal

Los Angeles County health officials have asked film and television crews to halt production as COVID-19 cases continue to soar in Southern California.

LOS ANGELES - Los Angeles County health officials are asking film and TV crews to strongly consider pausing production for a few weeks following the COVID-19 surge that is filling up hospitals.

Production is currently still permitted across the state, but LA County health officials are hoping people in the industry will stop production while the surge is ongoing. LA County Public Health emailed an update to FilmLA, the county's film permit office, [to remind them of the current surge in COVID-19 cases, deaths and hospitalizations.](#)

Local filmmakers like Ana Lydia Monaco do not believe it's a good idea to halt production.

"I am not a fan for several reasons. For those who are not familiar with the film and TV and commercial world, they probably just think it's an actor and a director and a camera and they don't realize the amount of people that would be out of work and it would impact Los Angeles as a whole. It would impact restaurants, the few that are still surviving because I had to cater my food so therefore I hired a restaurant. It would impact vendors. We had to rent equipment," she said.

Monaco said film sets are also safe with the new, strict COVID-19 protocols in place. Some productions ensure people are getting tested for the virus multiple times per week.

"Being on a film set is probably one of the safest things to do right now or to be in because everyone has to be tested before you even start," she said.

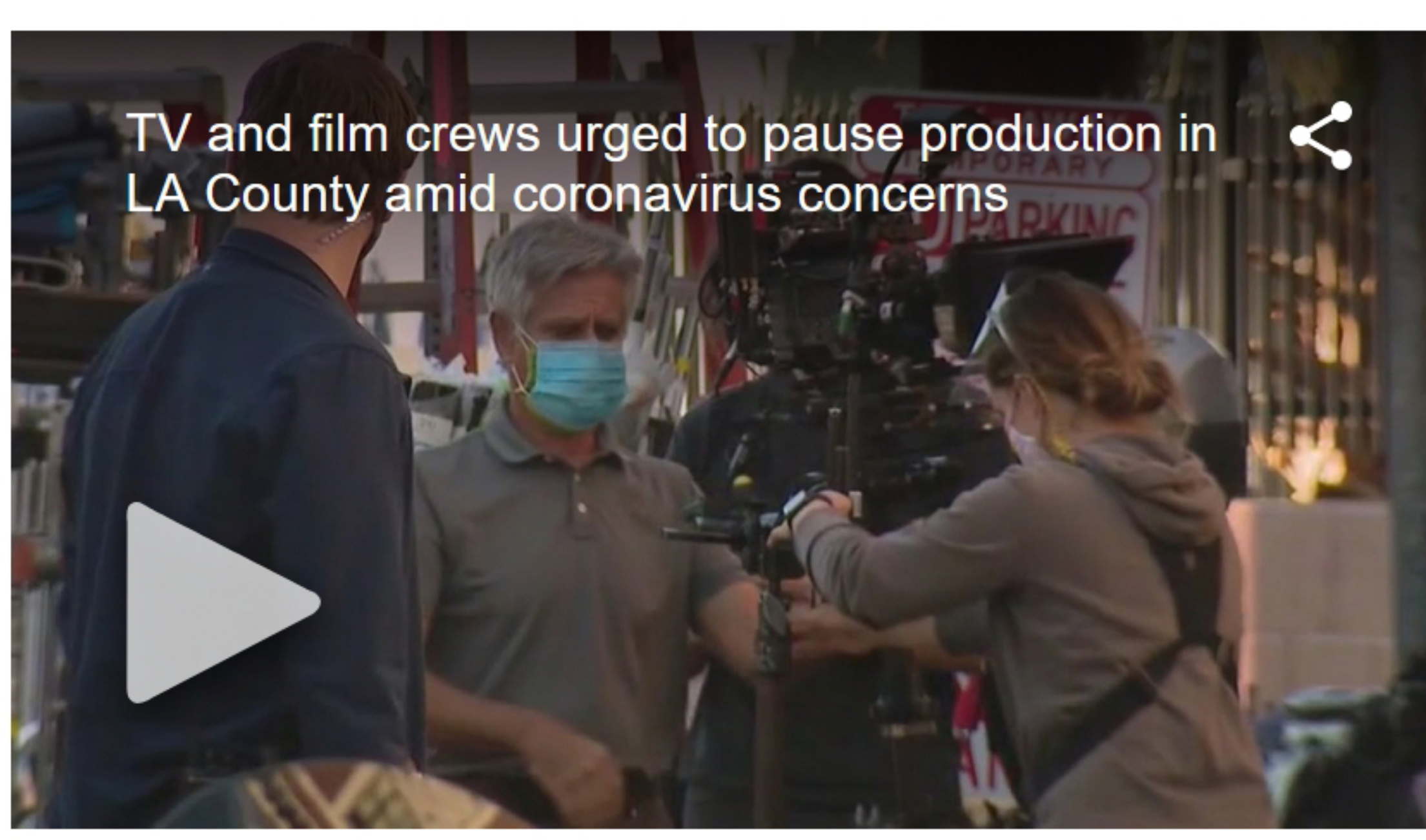
Monaco crowdfunded and shot her short film "Lola" during the pandemic. It's a film that promotes self-love, and self-acceptance with a plus-sized Latina woman as the leading actress. The leading actress experiences weight bias from society and the medical field.

"We had to change locations [for the film "Lola"]. We also had to change the number of crew that we could hire and we couldn't hire as many people as we wanted to. We also had to limit the amount of time that people are around or exposed to each other. We did a lot of rehearsals ahead of time. We must have done I think six table reads through Zoom, all the wardrobe through Zoom. We did the production design through Zoom so everything was done virtually for what you normally would do together," said Monaco.

Monaco described it as a difficult process. She said the crew cleans and sanitizes everything routinely and has a COVID-19 compliance officer in place.

"I couldn't risk getting people sick, but people dying and it wouldn't just be me personally, it would be the entire set, the locations, everybody involved so it was a really hard thing to do, and it's something that only people that are committed to telling stories are willing to do, to take these precautions because you love the craft and you love film and you want to do it right because you don't want this to stop," said Monaco.

Actress Noree Victoria, who is also the Vice-Chair for New Filmmakers LA, also talked about the new protocols she has experienced firsthand on set.



TV and film crews urged to pause production in LA County amid coronavirus concerns

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"There are more expenses. There's a lot more anxiety. You have to have a COVID compliance officer. You have to be on every 'P' and 'Q', and have every 'T' crossed, every 'I' dotted. You cannot cut corners. You have to test negative several times before you even join the production and then there's ongoing testing during the production. Also, there are new rules in place. There is no eating on set so your food is packaged and brought to you," she said.

Victoria said it has also been difficult for actresses of color.

"It has not been easy, it has been a challenge, there have been opportunities especially if you are an actor of color or a specific minority looking to get ahead, a lot of those opportunities that opened up have started to slow down because it's a pandemic. We have to remember that we have a purpose as artists to still bookmark these times and interpret them for generations to come," said Victoria.

Victoria said shutting the industry down again would impact scores of people in LA.

"The consequences of shutting down the film economy are far more reaching than what you see on television. There are families that rely on being able to transport things to and from set. There are construction workers, laborers that build the set and break them down. There are caterers, editors, writers," she explained.

FilmLA released the following statement after county health officials issued the advisory to consider pausing productions:

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MEDIA ADVISORY – DECEMBER 29, 2020

We've received many inquiries today about filming and what FilmLA has seen – permit-wise – over the past couple of weeks.

The local film industry is highly invested in efforts to control COVID-19, as demonstrated by the strict safety protocols and testing that all productions are subject to. Receptive to the guidance of County public health experts, the industry also responsibly began dialing back activity considerably, beginning earlier in December.

Data we will publish in January will reveal that incoming applications for permits to film declined significantly in the month of December, and last week to lows we have not seen since the weeks after restart of production last summer.

Please look for a comprehensive update from FilmLA Research in the New Year.

Sign up here for access to FilmLA Research updates:
<https://www.filmla.com/our-services/research/>

According to a separate release from FilmLA, LA County health officials have praised the film industry on several occasions for its efforts to stop the spread by moving more work outside, and complying with health orders.