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## Met Police issue photographers' rights advice

What you're allowed to do in a public place

by Duncan Geere published on 9 July 2009

Following a number of high-profile incidents involving photographers, the public and the law, the Metropolitan Police has issued a set of guidelines that lay out the rights that photographers and the police are given.

"We encourage officers and the public to be vigilant against terrorism but recognise the balance between effective policing and protecting Londoners and respecting the rights of the media and the general public to take photographs", says the Police.

"Members of the public and the media do not need a permit to film or photograph in public places and police have no power to stop them filming or photographing incidents or police personnel".

However, there are a few key areas where photography is not allowed. Section 44 of the Terrorism Act 2000 says that in an area where S44 is in place, officers can view photos on a phone or camera to see if the images could be used in connection with terrorism.

If the officer "reasonably suspects" those photos will be used in connection with terrorism, then the camera or phone can be seized. Then there's Section 58a of the same act, which says that the officer has to be able to demonstrate that reasonable suspicion, adding:

"It should ordinarily be considered inappropriate to use Section 58a to arrest people photographing police officers in the course of normal policing activities, including protests, as without more, there is no link to terrorism".

The last few sections deal with the media, though



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we take some exception to the statement "genuine members of the media carry identification, for instance the UK Press Card". Now that citizen journalism is so widespread and popular, we're concerned that this could exclude members of the public who are trying to document a situation but don't have a press card.

If you're a photographer who's had a run-in with the police in the past, and you're not a terrorist, then we'd like to hear what you think of the guidelines issued. Share your views in the comments.