PPE INFOSHEET

Protest and civil unrest PPE recommendations

Journalist safety is not about what worked that one time on one assignment. It is about science, occupational health and safety standards, government regulations and industry best practices.

1 Protect your head

The most likely head injury while covering protests is **blunt impact**: rocks, bottles, thrown debris and less-lethal munitions.

RECOMMENDATION

ANSI/ISEA Z89.1 Type II helmet

Type II means the helmet is rated for top and side impact. Type I covers top impact only.

Ballistic helmets are built to stop some bullets and fragments. They are not certified to the ANSI/ISEA Z89.1 impact standard.

Check your gear

- [ ] Label inside the shell reads ANSI/ISEA Z89.1 Type II
- [ ] Chin strap fitted and fastened, so it stays on when you move or fall
- [ ] Fits with your eye protection and respirator at the same time
- [ ] Any hard hit, even with no visible damage, requires a new helmet

2 Protect your eyes

The most likely eye injuries are **blunt impact** from less-lethal projectiles and thrown debris, and **chemical exposure** from pepper spray and tear gas. Impact rounds have permanently blinded journalists at protests.

RECOMMENDATION

Ballistic eyewear, MIL-PRF-32432 or MIL-PRF-31013

ANSI Z87+ safety glasses, the OSHA minimum, are tested at 150 feet per second. MIL-PRF eyewear is tested to stop a small steel fragment at about 650 feet per second.

Wear glasses? Buy a frame that takes a prescription insert. No eyewear is certified to stop a direct hit from every impact munition.

Check your gear

- [ ] MIL-PRF-32432 or 31013 listed on the manufacturer's spec sheet, not just the Z87+ mark
- [ ] Sealed, anti-fog goggles packed whenever gas or spray is possible
- [ ] Clear lenses for night work. Tinted lenses only in daylight
- [ ] Fits with your helmet and respirator without breaking either seal

3 Protect your lungs

The most likely respiratory hazard is **chemical exposure**: CS and CN tear gas, pepper spray and smoke. The effects can disable you in seconds and leave you unable to move away from the next hazard.

RECOMMENDATION

Full-face respirator with a CS/CN/P100 canister

One sealed unit covers eyes, nose and mouth. The canister filters riot-control agents and 99.97 percent of airborne particles. A half mask or N95 leaves your eyes open to gas.

Know the limits. Many full-face respirators carry no impact rating on the face shield. The canister does not filter carbon monoxide or supply oxygen, so it is not fire protection.

Check your gear

- [ ] Canister marked CS/CN and P100. Sealed until needed, replaced after exposure
- [ ] Medical clearance and a fit test before you rely on it
- [ ] Facial hair breaks the seal. Shave before the assignment
- [ ] Seal check every time you put it on, and practice getting it on fast
- [ ] Carried where you can reach it in seconds, not at the bottom of the bag

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4 Protect your core

There is no such thing as a bulletproof vest. Body armor is rated to stop specific bullets at specific speeds, and only where the panel covers you. A stopped round can still break ribs and cause internal injury.

Level IIIA now called HG2

Soft, flexible panels. Rated for handgun rounds up to .44 Magnum. Not rated for rifle rounds, knives or spikes.

Level IV now called RF3

Rigid ceramic plate. Rated for a .30-06 armor-piercing rifle round. Protects only the area behind the plate, roughly 10 by 12 inches front and back. About 6 to 8 pounds per plate.

Six options

Option	Level	What to know	Typical price
1. Ballistic undershirt	IIIA	Thin panel on the front and back of a compression T-shirt. Protects vital organs. Most concealable and lightest. Easy to wear on long days. Gender-specific styles.	**$275 to $600**
2. Concealable armor carrier	IIIA or IV	Worn under a shirt or jacket. Heavier and less concealable than an undershirt, depending on size and protection level.	**$400 to $850 (IIIA) $700 to $1,200 (IV)**
3. Traditional ballistic vest	IIIA	Wraps the torso for more coverage. Widest variety of models. Slightly heavier and less concealable. Gender-specific fits.	**$500 to $1,200**
4. Outer vest	IIIA	Worn over clothes. Easy to take on and off. May have pockets. Not designed to be concealed, though some are less obvious than others.	**$400 to $900**
5. Outer vest with plates	IIIA + IV	The most protection available. Soft armor plus a Level IV plate front and back. Heavy, very visible and uncomfortable.	**$900 to $2,000**
6. Armored garments	Mostly IIIA	Armor built into puffer vests, fleece vests, denim jackets and more. Check the coverage area. Many protect less of the torso than a vest.	**$400 to $1,200**

Price ranges are approximate U.S. retail figures as of November 2026 and vary by size, material and manufacturer.

Which armor is right for you?

THE THREAT
Handgun or rifle? Match the armor to the assignment, not the worst case.

WEIGHT
An undershirt weighs under 2 pounds. A plated vest can top 20.

HEAT
Armor traps body heat. Plan water and rest breaks.

FIT WITH YOUR KIT
Try it on with your helmet, respirator, camera straps and credentials.

THE LAW
States set their own rules on who can buy armor and how. Check where you buy and work.

ACTIVITY LEVEL
The more you move, the lighter and more flexible your armor should be.

VISIBILITY
Visible armor changes how crowds and police read you.

BUDGET
Plan for replacement at the end of the warranty.

Before you buy

- ☐ Model appears on the NIJ Compliant Products List
- ☐ Label shows the level, model and date of manufacture
- ☐ Measured and fitted. Armor that gaps or rides up leaves you exposed
- ☐ Ballistic material has a lifespan. Most makers warrant Kevlar and other panels for five years
- ☐ Store flat, dry and out of sunlight. Never machine wash panels
- ☐ Replace after any hit. Never buy used armor

Our position. If you have decided to wear body armor, we recommend concealable armor for the vast majority of assignments in the United States. Crisis Ready Media does not advocate for any make, model or brand of protective equipment.

This infosheet is general guidance and does not replace training, a risk assessment for your assignment, or the manufacturer's instructions. No equipment eliminates risk. Standards cited: ANSI/ISEA Z89.1; ANSI/ISEA Z87.1; MIL-PRF-32432; MIL-PRF-31013; 29 C.F.R. 1910.134; 29 C.F.R. 1926.100 and 1926.102; NIJ Standards 0101.06 and 0101.07. November 2026.

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