

Best Practices for Bridge Safety

Safety Measures for NHBB Bridge Protests

Bridge Protesting is much more than a social outing. We are protesting on bridges to engage in an act of public dissent. Our team needs to stay mission driven - to do this we need to keep showing up with purpose.

Please understand that you may be exposed to serious physical and psychological harm, by bad actors (counter protestors), while protesting on a bridge.

To date, there have been 3 incidents since we began doing bridge actions (the end of May 2025). To protect ourselves and each other, we must work together, as a finely tuned team.

Bridge Incidents So Far

- On one bridge we had an extremely agitated individual approach our protesters. He was screaming and yelling. He approached their signs and banners and repeatedly ripped them off of the fence destroying them in the process.
 - Our protesters executed perfectly and kept calm while someone recorded his license plate. Even though he tried to obscure his license plate they were still able to get a clear shot of it. Police were called and they showed up. This incident was reported and is in process. All protesters are fine and committed to keep protesting.
- On another bridge, apparently hostile individuals drove their truck quite close to our bridge protesters revving the engine as they did so. In an instant the truck occupants stuck their arms out of the windows and hurled several large glass jars filled with some kind of fluid and a Dairy Queen cup filled with ice at our protesters. Glass shattered everywhere. It happened so quickly that they weren't able to see the license plate - just the state. Local police were called who responded appropriately and expressed concern for our protesters.
- On another bridge, our protesters were just setting up. Without any warning one protester felt a huge thud against her back and water was sprayed everywhere. Lots of traffic was passing behind these protesters so it wasn't possible to even determine which vehicle threw the water balloon. They weren't able to see who had thrown something and it was confusing because there was nothing lying on the ground. After some thought it was determined that it was a large water balloon. This

protester did some research to see if there are cameras in the area that might have captured a license plate. Unfortunately there were not. Police were notified.

Why These Protocols are Important

The following guidelines are extremely important for each Protester to study and implement. They need to be ingrained in your minds, your bodies and your teams.

When attacks happen, they happen very quickly. You and your bridgemate's safety will come down to how quickly you act. Knowing what to do beforehand can literally make the difference between life and death.

We will not shrink from fear and will continue to convey our messaging to the public during our bridge actions. We will continue even if pushback becomes worse. It is your personal choice to protest on the bridges. It's our goal to keep you better informed about safety measures and stress that you are ultra aware of your surroundings (situational awareness) for the safety of yourself and your team. Please know your safety is not guaranteed.

How you conduct yourself on the bridges is highly important.

The Huddle

Begin each bridge action with a huddle to designate what roles and responsibilities each member is to play.

- If the bridge has been adopted the lead person oversees managing all bridge practices and assignments.
- If the bridge is not adopted, a huddle should be made amongst those who are present and determine who will be the lead person.
- Always have an escape plan discussed and ready. Refresh your conflict de-escalation skills.
- Find out everyone's skill sets. It will help you work better as a team.

Roles & Assignments:

The Bridge Lead

- Manages and coordinates all bridge participants.

- They are the ones who will be the moderator for any group discussions and decisions.
- They are the only people who should talk directly with the police.
- Identify if anyone has medical expertise so that person is identified as a resource.
- All interactions with the police should be *discreetly* video recorded. That role should be only assigned to one person. It is important to NOT be aggressive or overtly recording in someone's face. There's no need to be secretive, but don't draw attention to yourself. It is your right to video anything in a public space, including the police.

The Lookouts

- 1 to 2 people are assigned, depending on the number of people on the bridge, to be lookouts for any approaching bad actors. This is the best early warning system. The lookouts must have their phones ready to record immediately and sound the alarm by blowing their whistles loudly.
- This is an extremely important and vital role. They must stay focused solely on scanning for potential threats—they must not allow themselves to be distracted.
- Bridge Protesters should be ready to film any hostile behavior from passersby.

The Video Recorder

- Video Recording is our Best Defense
- Record the overall scene that is happening.
- Get good closeups of each perpetrator if possible
- Get a closeup of their car license plate if possible
- Verbally describe what you are witnessing while or immediately after you have witnessed it— if possible.
- Assign just 1 person to video discreetly any police or counter protester interaction. (See roles and assignments above.)

Things to Carry on Your Person

- A fully charged phone and, if possible, a backup battery. "Video recording is your best defense!"
- Have a whistle on a lanyard that is accessible in an instant.
- Personal ID and emergency contact information. An idea? Put it in a tiny Ziplock bag and put it in a place where it can easily be found.
- Medical information folks should know about. For example: insulin for diabetics, epi-pens for allergic reactions, medications, and anything else of that nature.

- Have the local non-emergency police line handy. (Phone #s are in our Safety Document in our files section). In serious cases, call 911.
- A basic first aid kit.

Talking to Police

If / when police stop by to enquire what everyone is doing.

- One lead person should speak with law enforcement. Keep it calm, factual, and minimal. Again, a designated member of the team to video record all police interactions—whether they are friendly or not.
- Talk to police like you would to anyone. Be respectful and careful about what you share.
- Police may ask a lot of questions. You are under no obligation to answer any of them, including identifying yourself.

Police Community Outreach.

- The police you encounter on bridges will be local police that you may see many times if you go to the same bridge again and again. On your first meeting, take stock of them. Are they cops that show good morals and ethics and understanding of the laws pertaining to free speech and bridge ordinances? Over time build a working relationship with them. When bad things happen they will be fully on your side.

Making a courtesy call to the local police desk.

- Once a good relationship is established with the police, they will very much respect and appreciate a call that you will be on the bridge at a certain date and time. If a complaint comes into them then they know what to expect. *However, keep in mind that we have no obligation to do so. A trusted relationship must be established before taking this step.*

Corrupt Cops

- If an officer crosses a line, request a supervisor.
- The police's function is to protect and serve you, not to interrogate or intimidate you. Cops can be MAGA/Trump supporters and make things difficult as possible.
- Should you encounter a "bad cop" or one who is clearly ignorant about your civil rights and basic laws, ask and insist that you have his or her supervisor either come to the bridge or have them communicate on speaker phone.

- Police will come to a bridge whenever a complaint is reported to them. Often the calls come in from MAGA folks. Explain to the cop that you all are there as **peaceful non-violent protesters**.
- Anyone who gives a false report to the police can be prosecuted (counter protestors), but that can be hard to prove.
- You can ask for their name and have them show you their badge number.
- Don't be a pushover with aggressive bad cops. Challenge them, do not be dismissive. Ask them, "What are we doing wrong?"
- You have an advantage if you know the laws well and you use your conflict de-escalation skills on the cops.
- Find common ground to defuse or slow down the encounter. Call in a supervisor, even if you must call their non-emergency desk yourself.
- Remember, what a cop fears the most is having a complaint lodged against them. And if you have been following all the steps here, you will have video evidence of the encounter.
- State Police may take a harder line than local police. In the case of bad state cops, you must lodge your complaint with the Attorney General's Office.

What to Do if Bad Actors Engage with or Attack You on the Bridge

Violent Attacks

- These will come at you very quickly with little to no time to react, even with lookouts.
- Blow the Whistle! The assigned lookout(s) immediately blow their whistle as loud as possible at the first sign of bad actors approaching. These are the ones who are clearly aggressive, intimidating, and looking to do damage to both property and person.
- As soon as you hear the lookout's whistle: immediately stop what you are doing and face the threat ready to protect yourself, defend yourself, and flee.
- Help your fellow bridge mates escape with you. Also blow your whistle.
- The whistle can act as a deterrent by disorienting or throwing off track the perpetrator(s) attack. It also is a call for help for people outside the bridge to either help directly or to call 911. They also can become witnesses.
- Call 911 immediately!!
- Always video record!!

Non-violent, but Highly Aggressive Verbal Encounters

- First step is to ignore and not to respond to the aggressor.
- Everybody starts video recording in an overt way. Keep silent.
- Like bad cops, MAGA do not want to be caught on video as they know they are in the wrong. They will likely leave or calm down.
- Remember video recording is your best defense!!!
- Only the group leader interacts with the aggressor. The leader engages the aggressor with conflict de-escalation conversation to bring the temperature down and to sway the person or people to leave.
- Do not try to change their minds or reason with them.
- If the aggressor is in full blown rage, threatening, unpredictable, or unstable—call 911 immediately!!
- Neutralize the person as soon as possible. Pin them down. Lock them up so he can't move. Remove any weapons.
- If that is not possible: flee as fast as possible. Know where to run to safety once you are off the bridge.

Know Your State and Local Ordinances

- It is your First Amendment right of free speech to protest and display signs on bridges provided you are not obstructing traffic.
- There is a NH RSA (I couldn't find it, but I have read it) that states it is not permitted to affix signs to the bridge fences. So far, the police have not enforced this, and the law is ambiguous when it comes to free speech.
- Continue to hang your signs and banners to fences until the police ask you to remove them.
- You can ask them to cite what law or regulation states that it is not permitted to affix signs to fences.
- Many of the police do not know the nuances of regulation concerning hanging signs on bridges, or even your human rights.
- Be prepared to remove your signs off the fences if asked to by the police. It does not mean you have to stop protesting or leave the bridge. Be thinking on how to adapt for holding signs vs hanging them.
- RSA 664:17 only pertains to political campaign signage and advertising and does not apply to our activities.
- If a cop cites this RSA 664:17 as a reason you should remove your signs or not have signs on the bridge, you can respond that RSA only applies to political campaigns and not free speech protesting.

- Jurisdiction of the bridge structure is regulated by the DOT.

