

# Lights. Camera. Action. Things to know about filming in Dubai

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The city offers a variety of exciting visions and cultural blends, ready to feature as a backdrop in international and local film and television productions.

The Dubai government is keen to establish Dubai as a leading production destination with landmark buildings and state-of-the-art production facilities. The Dubai Film and TV Commission (**DFTC**) was established in recent times to facilitate shooting and production in the city, with a primary goal of the DFTC being to increase the number of film and television productions that are shot and produced in Dubai.

In December 2014, the Executive Council issued *Resolution No. 50 of 2014 Concerning the Dubai Film and TV Commission* (the “**Resolution**”) to substitute *Resolution No. 16 of 2012* (and its amendments) which set up the DFTC. The Resolution defines the objectives of the DFTC, with a key objective to increase local and international film and television production in Dubai.

DFTC has always been the sole body authorised to issue all audio and visual media production permits and to obtain related approvals from all government departments, free zones and private sector entities in Dubai. This still remains the position under the Resolution, however, it although the Resolution presents a new permit and fee structure, briefly summarised as follows:

- There are now nine types of permits available to production companies, which are categorised by production type (e.g. TV or film production for films and documentaries is one category; filming for advertisements is another).
- Most fees are now AED 3,000 (inclusive of a AED 500 application fee) and with some categories of permits now being valid for up to 30 days. Compared to the previous permit fees which could be as high as AED 25,000 for a 24-hour period, this is a notable reduction in the fees payable under the Resolution.
- Depending on the location, additional daily fees may be payable to the location operator. This is at the location operator’s discretion, noting that the Resolution clearly caps these fees at AED 25,000 per day. Any overcharge is to be refunded to the production company.
- Failure to obtain the appropriate permit may result in a fine, which can range between AED 15,000 to AED 25,000 depending on the description of the penalty.

Ahead of filming in Dubai, production companies are required to liaise with the DFTC and submit an application for a permit. Production companies should allow some time for this process, as they are also required to also submit scripts for film and television series for review by the DFTC (presumably, so that the DFTC can ensure that the cultural and social mores of Dubai are not compromised in the script).

The permit fees, and any additional location fees, are upfront costs that need to be factored in to the overall cost of production. This may be a deterrent for some production companies and other entities wishing to film in Dubai with small production budgets. DFTC is conscious of this, and one of the DFTC’s objectives in the new 2014 Resolution is to decrease the cost of media production in Dubai.

In the absence of any tax or other rebates or incentives, the reduction in permit costs no doubt places the DFTC in good stead for achieving this objective. In addition, the DFTC does remain available to discuss

ways to reduce the cost of filming in Dubai and to provide financial incentives, whether through special arrangement with key industry partners, licensing and fee rebates, or negotiations with service providers.